

OSLO IS DEAD
CHARLES KRAUTHAMMER

the weekly

Standard

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CRACK-UP AT JUSTICE



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THE PROFESSOR VS. THE INFO-BABE

There's a fascinating argument going on between two *Dartmouth Review*-niks. But wild dogs couldn't drag us into the middle of this one, so we'll just report the facts. On February 23, Laura Ingraham, a former *Review* editor who has gone on to fame as a CBS pundit, wrote a piece for the *Washington Post*. She recalled her *Review* days when she had called homosexuals "sodomites," but said her views have been tempered since she learned her brother is gay. She said that before she saw AIDS ravage her brother's partner, she had thought AIDS was just another disease. Now she is an advocate of increased AIDS funding.

Jeffrey Hart, a Dartmouth professor and the *Review*'s longtime faculty adviser, has been circulating a memo in which he takes Ingraham to task: "Ingraham constructed a Stalinist

show trial in which she acted as the prosecutor with her former self as defendant. In this political show trial she invited *The Dartmouth Review* to join her in the dock as she made her phoney political confession." Hart continues, "In fact, while at Dartmouth, Ingraham held the most extreme anti-homosexual views imaginable. For example, she was wary of eating at a local restaurant then called 'Bentley's' because she thought the waiters and cooks were homosexuals and might be spitting in her food." And he concludes, "This is an extremely dark episode in career-building and conscious manipulation. It obviously was designed to promote what she foolishly believes to be a career in the media."

Ingraham responded in calm tones. "It was a piece written from the heart and not meant in any way as an attempt to malign my friends."

She went on to express hope that Hart's missive was written in a "flash of anger." And she concluded, "I wrote the piece mainly for my brother and for Richard, who died yesterday."

Hart sent around his response, opening, "Nothing that follows is confidential." He called Ingraham's letter "pathetic" and asserted that Ingraham "legitimized the smears everlastingly issued by the Dartmouth administration." As to her final sentence, Hart wrote, "Socko ending! In fact, people die all the time, and not only of AIDS, as she seems to think, and for which she demands more federal spending as a 'duty to us all.'" Finally Hart declared: "I have absolutely zero interest in her career. If she wants to read garbage over a teleprompter, fine."

Any volunteers to mediate this dispute?

TONY SNOW AND THE FARRAKHAN CULT

In his ecumenical Easter edition of Fox News Sunday, host Tony Snow interviewed Nation of Islam honcho Min. Louis Farrakhan. In the process Snow showed signs of wanting to be the second journalistic convert, after columnist Robert Novak, to Farrakhan revisionism. This is the view that—though the man sounds like a crackpot anti-Semitic anti-American demagogue—he is in fact a cleverly disguised family-values proto-Republican. In one of his questions to Farrakhan, Snow said: "You have in the past, described some—some Zionists—and you've been misquoted on this largely, but you have said some Zionists are practitioners of a dirty religion."

That's an interesting—and euphemistically dishonest—way to put it. Farrakhan has hardly been misquoted. Who needs to misquote a man who is so quotable that he once regaled *Washington Post* editors and reporters with the tale of his 1985 trip aboard a flying saucer to chat with the shade of Elijah Muhammad? A year before that, in June 1984, Farrakhan gave a speech larded with references to the evil scientist Yakub, whom

Nation of Islam adepts believe created the degenerate white race by selective cross-breeding of weak black stock. This, as it happens, is the same speech in which Farrakhan said that Judaism is a "gutter religion"—a phrase whose paternity he has ever since been denying.

A strange chorus of right-wing well-wishers has lately joined Farrakhan in his denials, which may be where Snow picked up the "some Zionists" phraseology. For the record, here are excerpts of what Farrakhan said in his June 24, 1984, address to followers at his Chicago headquarters, as broadcast on WBEE radio, tape-recorded by the *Chicago Sun-Times*, and subsequently transcribed by the Associated Press. The only possible misreading to which these excerpts might lend themselves is that anti-Semitism is the only hatred Farrakhan indulges in; as a reading of the whole speech (readily available on Nexis) makes clear, he also hates Christians, whites generally, and large chunks of the modern world:

I say to the Jewish people, and to the government of the United States of America, the presence of a state called Israel is an outlaw act. . . . America and England and the nations [that backed Israel's existence] are criminals in

Scrapbook



the sight of almighty God. Now that nation called Israel never have had any peace in 40 years and she will never have any peace because there can be no peace structured on injustice, thievery, lying and deceit and using the name of God to shield your gutter religion under his holy and righteous name.

Tony, Bob, et al.: Please don't make us quote this man's vile words again.

THE "EXTREMISTS" ARE BACK

What do the following people have in common: Gary Bauer, president of the Family Research Council, Robert Casey, the former Democratic governor of Pennsylvania, Princeton professors John J. DiIulio, Jr. (a contributing editor to *THE WEEKLY STANDARD*) and Robert P. George, Emory University professor Elizabeth Fox-Genovese, Southern Baptist leader Richard D. Land, and Catholic League for Civil and

Religious Rights president William Donohue? They are among the distinguished signatories of a full-page ad advocating U.S. government attention to the cause of religious freedom in China. This ad ran Easter Sunday in the *Washington Times* under the headline "An open letter to Vice President Gore."

But the signatories have something else in common, too. For daring to tick off the vice president with their ad, they join the ever-growing list of, yes, "extremists." And not just extremists. They are, said Gore press secretary Ginny Terzano, as the *Washington Times* reported, "right-wing extremists interested in attacking the vice president."

So being for religious freedom is right-wing extremism, according to the Clinton administration.

UPDATES

California's Civil Rights Initiative, whose progress was often chronicled on this page, looks like another one of those cases where California led the nation. An initiative patterned on CCRI, which would outlaw race and sex discrimination in public employment,

contracting, and education, is being promoted now in Washington state. Its chief advocates—the Ward Connerlys of the Granola Belt—are Scott Smith, a state representative, and Tim Eyman, the owner of a small business. They are hopeful for the initiative's success in 1998, noting that polls show 71 percent support for the idea across the state, and a "surprising" 62 percent in "liberal Seattle."

And in Wisconsin, in the April 1 elections reported on two weeks ago by Craig Gilbert, Supreme Court justice Jon Wilcox, who is expected to uphold the constitutionality of that state's experiments in school choice, prevailed over challenger Walt Kelly, who was backed by the teachers' unions, by a 63-37 margin. In the race for state Superintendent of Education, the anti-choice incumbent John Benson held his job, 55-45, against insurgent schoolteacher Linda Cross, who supports parental choice. On the whole, good news for school-choice supporters—whom we soon expect to be denounced as "right-wing extremists" by Clinton-Gore spokesmen.

Casual

FORGIVENESS

Several years ago, a close friend informed me in the bluntest possible terms that I'd been treating him shabbily. He had a list of specific offenses: I'd been patronizing, puffed up, etc. My first reaction was to feel wrongly accused. But after thinking about what he'd said for a day or two, consulting another friend, and praying, I wasn't so sure. In the end, I concluded my friend was mostly right. So what did I need to do about it? I sought out my friend and asked for forgiveness.

Normally I wouldn't burden anyone with a personal confession. And normally I wouldn't try to draw lessons for the nation's political leaders from my own experience. Most of my rules for living are pretty humdrum (Rule 1: Always ask for extra napkins at a fast-food restaurant) and don't have any relevance to national affairs. But forgiveness is different. As far as I know, it didn't come up at the recent civility summit held by House Republicans and Democrats in Hershey, Pa. But it should have. Seeking forgiveness works, both in repairing relationships and as an effective political tool.

The freshest example is Kenneth Starr, the Whitewater independent counsel. He announced in February he was stepping down to become law school dean at Pepperdine University in California. His friends, allies, law partners, and Whitewater prosecution colleagues were aghast, and the media assault was brutal. Starr quickly realized he'd made an enormous mistake in cutting out before the Whitewater case was completed. Even so, his inclination was to announce simply that he'd reconsidered and would stay on—no more.

Fortunately, his advisers cajoled him into going further. He said he'd

blundered: "As Fiorello La Guardia would say, when I make a mistake, it's a beaut." Starr said he'd made "an unwise judgment" and "consulted inadequately with my colleagues." He said his decision to leave was one "I deeply regret." While Starr didn't explicitly ask the public to forgive him, that was the effect of his mea culpa. It worked. Media criticism stopped, and Starr's relationship with friends and co-workers was restored. And at least from appearances, he looked like a man whose soul had been restored as well.

Now compare the Starr episode with Vice President Al Gore's painfully unsuccessful effort to extinguish the flap over his role in the Democratic fund-raising scandal. At his "no controlling legal authority" press conference, Gore said he'd never make fund-raising calls from the White House again. "Are you basically then admitting that you made a mistake or made mistakes?" a reporter asked. "No," Gore said, and elaborated on his legalistic alibi.

This was the wrong answer. For reporters, it kept the story alive, and Gore has continued to be pounded by the press. Had he admitted his mistake and apologized, it might not have ended the controversy but it would have defused things a bit. My guess is the press would have begun moving on to the next story.

Of all pols, President Clinton ought to understand the political value of forgiveness. He's exploited the idea before, apologizing directly to voters in Arkansas when he sought reelection in 1982. They forgave him. A decade later, he appeared with Hillary after Gennifer Flowers declared she had had a long-term affair with him. The point

was if Hillary had forgiven him, voters should too. Many did.

Now, Clinton has refused to ask for forgiveness for any presidential wrongdoing. Maybe he subscribes to the dictum of James Baker, Ronald Reagan's White House chief of staff, that a president should never admit error because it would erode his authority.

In Clinton's case, a plea for forgiveness might enhance his authority. Certainly the explanation that "mistakes were made" in campaign fund-raising at the White House didn't help. Rather than gaining forgiveness, Clinton made matters worse. This was unnecessary. The president knew he'd made mistakes. His aides knew it. All he had to do was admit, sincerely, that he'd erred, and was sorry. The scandal wouldn't have died down entirely, but Clinton might have become less ripe a target of reporters and the public.

One more thing: Insincere attempts at forgiveness rarely work. Back in January, Speaker Newt Gingrich said he'd been "too brash, too self-confident, or too pushy," and he asked to be forgiven. It worked for a while. A few weeks later, though, Gingrich blamed others for his ethics troubles. He suggested his lawyer should apologize for making a mistake. Instantly, Gingrich was back in hot water again, his bid for forgiveness exposed as fraudulent. Still, I give Gingrich credit for making a stab at forgiveness anyway. That's one more stab than most politicians are willing to make.

Why are they so reluctant? I suppose it's for the same reason so few indulge in self-deprecatory humor. They're so self-obsessed and pampered they just can't imagine they've done anything wrong, ever. They should check out Proverbs 28:13: "He who conceals his sins does not prosper, but whoever confesses and renounces them finds mercy." In my case, when I asked to be forgiven, mercy is exactly what I found.

FRED BARNES

THE TRUTH ABOUT NEEDLE EXCHANGE

I am writing to commend the excellent editorial "Junkie Science" (March 31). It is right on target in saying that the strategy of distributing needles to addicts in order to prevent AIDS is nothing but "glorified guesswork." There is no valid scientific evidence that needle-exchange programs have resulted in the alleviation of HIV/AIDS. Studies to date have been inconclusive. Needle-exchange programs have not been shown to have any advantage over drug-treatment programs.

In fact, there is evidence that these programs do more harm than good. Research has shown a connection between the use of drugs and the contraction of AIDS due to the toxic and damaging effects of the drugs on the immune system. Giving needles to addicts for the injection of drugs not only perpetuates drug addiction but puts communities at risk for increased criminal and violent behavior related to the use of dangerous drugs.

Many are not aware that the needles-for-addicts campaign, like the push for marijuana as medicine, is a key strategy of the drug-legalization lobby, which seeks ready access to drugs and at the same time "safer" use of these mind-altering and addictive substances. Neither of these strategies is compassionate, humane, or beneficial for the addict or society. Science and, yes morality, not politics, should be the foundation for sound and effective drug policy, especially for those with AIDS.

STEPHANIE HAYNES
ALPINE, TX

It was extremely heartening to read your junkie-science editorial. I have closely observed and studied needle exchange as both a former member of my local community board and a long-time resident of my Lower Eastside community, where I live two blocks from the local needle "hand-out" storefront that dispenses upwards of 20,000 syringes a week. The concurrent breakdown in law and order, community disinvestment, and decrease in the quality of life for residents prompted our community board to pass a

lengthy resolution in favor of shutting the place down immediately (which was completely ignored by every one of our elected officials and the state Department of Health, which responded by renewing the needle-dispensers' contract for two more years).

As insidious as the exchange itself is the misinformation disseminated by exchange proponents, oftentimes the very researchers whose studies conclude that their data do not "provide clear evidence that needle exchange programs decrease HIV infection." The Orwellian concept of "harm reduction" upon which they base some pie-in-the-sky notion of "safe drug use" has been nearly impossible to



repudiate, particularly when given credence by the *New York Times* and other newspapers. I am personally of the opinion that giving clean syringes to junkies is exploitation and human experimentation (without true consent) of the ugliest variety.

NANCY SOSMAN
NEW YORK, NY

Your editorial addresses "two competing moralities." It states that there is a form of "libertarianism which has it that adults bent on self-destruction should be allowed—and helped" and an "old-fashioned morality that . . . government should not, in principle, play facilitator to any life-denying impulse." This gives the impression that libertarians favor gov-

ernment-sponsored needle-exchange programs. The editorial misrepresents libertarianism, which opposes governmental involvement in drug use and other private concerns.

The libertarian view is that government's role should be confined to controlling aggression and should not be extended to any social program, whether it helps or harms its recipients. It is true that libertarians would allow people to engage in adverse behavior. As to those who do, let them experience justice, namely, "As ye sow, so shall ye reap."

ALLEN WEINGARTEN
MORRISTOWN, NJ

NEWT RATINGS ARE UP

Rep. Peter King's reckless assertion that Newt Gingrich's approval rating is lower than the ebola virus's should not stand unchallenged ("Why I Oppose Newt," March 31).

My own research reveals that no public-opinion survey contains such an outcome. Some polls do show the speaker and the ebola virus at essentially equivalent approval ratings. A clear majority, however, shows Gingrich with a higher rating than the virus. Hang in there, Newt!

FRITZ PETTYJOHN
ANCHORAGE, AK

It is a sad day in America when a magazine ignores the most corrupt administration our country has ever had and instead chooses to join in crucifying one of the few politicians who had the courage and the verbal skills to try to implement change. I can get all the Newt-bashing I want in any mainstream newspaper, magazine, or evening news program. I certainly did not subscribe to THE WEEKLY STANDARD to get more of the same.

While *National Review* is depicting the Clintons and Gore as "Manchurian Candidates," you people provide space for Peter King to denigrate Newt Gingrich.

Maybe Peter King supporters will be motivated to become subscribers to THE WEEKLY STANDARD and offset those of us to whom you are now history.

WILLIAM D. FIGGINS
CAPE CORAL, FL

Correspondence

I read Rep. Peter King with interest and concern. I would find it easy to trust King's motivation if not for a few points.

When I ran against King in the 1994 Republican primary for Congress, he supported Newt Gingrich. Could this just have been an opportunist at work?

King voted for Gingrich as speaker in January 1997. Could it be that in January, King feared what could happen to him if he voted against the speaker? And could it be that he has decided that Gingrich is weak enough to be challenged publicly?

During our debate in 1994 and again in 1996, King said with bravado that I had done a great disservice to the Republican party by challenging him in a primary for Congress.

Make no mistake about it; by publicly denouncing the speaker, King is inflicting long-term damage on the Republican party. King would do well to remember Ronald Reagan's admonition, "Thou shalt not speak ill about another Republican."

King is a strong supporter of Clinton. During our debates and in the press, he has made it clear that he supports Clinton and deals with him extensively. For example, did President Clinton ask King to come out publicly in support of Anthony Lake, and if so, why? What precisely does King's backing of the president do for the interests of the Republican party and the country?

The point is, no matter what King wants to do about Gingrich, it should be done in private. The readers of THE WEEKLY STANDARD must now ask themselves: What will King do next to support himself at the expense of the Republican party?

ROBERT PREVIDI
MANHASSET, NY

KEEP THE CONTRACT ALIVE

Major Garrett, in his article "Newt Melts" (March 31), quoted many prominent Republicans who are critical of Speaker Gingrich's leadership. The Contract with America described the interests shared by leaders and followers. It was an exciting program, widely supported by conservatives, which introduced changes that would

have improved all facets of our government. It would be good to reestablish the principles of the contract and present them in a way that will again encourage leaders to lead. I am sure that the speaker is trying to do this now.

WILLIAM L. MOBRAATEN
SARASOTA, FL

DON'T KNOCK FUN MAGS

I got a chuckle out of David Brooks's "Accessorize, Accessorize" (March 31). But as a regular reader of *International Watch World* magazine, I have to say to my friend Brooks: Lighten up.

It's great that America has a silly magazine dedicated to every possible obsession: from complicated watches to pens to cigars. There's even a pretty good magazine dedicated to the micro-details of Republican strategy, fratricide, gossip, and plotting. Fashion can be obnoxious. But if the alternative is a society of Mao suits and only one kind of wristwatch, available at the People's Supply Store #14, sign me up for *Pen World*.

Actually, there could even be a magazine for people who fashionably condemn fashion. Call it *Hey! You Don't Need That!*—*The Journal of Angry Utilitarianism*, \$2.95 an issue, on good paper.

MIKE MURPHY
MCLEAN, VA

KNOCK THE LITERATI

This is a double thank-you for the reviews by Mary Eberstadt ("Pants on Fire!," March 24) and Stephen Schwartz ("Ismail Kadare's Prize Fight," March 24). Both of them take on the thankless yet necessary task of telling us that this or that literary emperor, indeed, has no clothes!

I have never been a fan of human vivisection, but Eberstadt's treatment of Kathryn Harrison's book is about as close as I'd like to come. Harrison's treacherous auto(?)biography deserves every surgical cut and excision Eberstadt inflicts as she anatomizes the transplanted segments of Harrison's tale. Simultaneously, Eberstadt reveals the prurient gullibility of so many literati who swallow the book whole and find it delectable.

Stephen Schwartz's comprehensive review of the works of the Albanian writer Ismail Kadare does a valuable service to those like me whose only access to Kadare's work comes from what publishers provide. Sadly, the Nobel prize has been too often a kind of *prix du jour* for whatever nationalist literature the Swedish Academy wishes to promote that year. To place Kadare along with Solzhenitsyn, Faulkner, and Undset would be an outrage.

FATHER GREGORY M. SCHWEERS
IRVING, TX

BATTLE OF THE TEXTBOOKS

In David Warren Saxe's otherwise cogent article "History Standards: Still an Outrage" (March 3), one point needs clarification. Most of the textbooks that Saxe takes to task appeared well before the standards did. The proposed national standards tried to legitimize misinformation and shady historiography already to be found in some textbooks. They affirmed new content and interpretive sentiments that editors had been incorporating into the books for more than a decade.

The ultimate influence of the 1994 standards on American history textbooks cannot yet be determined. The real tests will come during the next two years, above all in the influential states of California and Texas, as publishers submit new books and makeovers that they hope will find audiences in the 2000s.

GILBERT T. SEWALL
AMERICAN TEXTBOOK COUNCIL
NEW YORK, NY

THE WEEKLY STANDARD

welcomes letters to the editor. Letters will be edited for length and clarity and must include the writer's name, address, and phone number.

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CRACK-UP AT JUSTICE

The number-two job at the Department of Justice, which holds the title of deputy attorney general, is vacant. The number-three job, associate attorney general, is vacant. The solicitor general's office, which represents the United States before the Supreme Court, is being run by former White House deputy counsel Walter Dellinger. He cannot be confirmed as solicitor general because Senate Judiciary Committee chairman Orrin Hatch remembers and still resents Dellinger's role in the undoing of Robert Bork. Dellinger is expected to leave the department later this year amid persistent whispered complaints from Supreme Court clerks that his briefs are unreliable, unhelpful, and excessively political.

Joel Klein is serving as "acting" assistant attorney general in the antitrust division. Until 1995, Klein helped manage documents and staff testimony involved in various scandal inquiries as an official in the White House counsel's office. The Office of Legal Counsel, which handles policy matters, also has a vacancy at the top. Its "acting" head is Beth Nolan, yet another White House lawyer who worked on White-water in Vince Foster's office.

The most important assistant attorney general job—in charge of the department's criminal division—has been vacant for an unbelievable 20 months. Filling in is John Keeney, a career official who has been with Justice since the Truman administration. He is said to be very tired. Keeney has recused himself from his office's most important current investigation because his son is Lippogate principal John Huang's defense attorney.

There is an assistant attorney general for the department's civil division. He is Frank Hunger. He is Al Gore's brother-in-law.

And there is an attorney general of the United States. Nominally. Her name is Janet Reno. The bureaucratic chaos at senior levels of the Justice Department is not entirely her fault. It is President Clinton who has, from the start, imposed on Reno a series of deputies with much more intimate personal and political connections to the first family than she herself enjoys—people like disgraced associate attorney general Webb Hubbell. It is President Clinton

who has lately populated Justice with refugees from his embattled White House, men and women who take their new assignments already ethically compromised and exhausted. And it is President Clinton who, paralyzed in any personnel decision by ideological calculation and diversity-crazed bean-counting, continues to leave so many crucial Justice offices empty.

But Janet Reno tolerates it all. She, too, is a counted bean, after all—the reluctant president's third choice for attorney general, a job Clinton believed could go only to a woman. And Reno's toleration of a department staffed this way implies a larger problem for the orderly and impartial administration of justice at "the people's law firm," as she likes to style it.

It's a problem that has been famously in evidence almost from the moment Reno was confirmed to office in March 1993. The following month, under still cloudy circumstances, Reno ordered the FBI assault that ended in the deaths of 80 Branch Davidian cultists in Waco, Texas—25 children among them. No one at Justice was ever disciplined for this catastrophe. But Reno took full "responsibility," justifying her actions with references to allegations of Davidian "child abuse" that have never been substantiated. And she survived. No, more than survived: She found her Washington reputation magically enhanced. Thus was inaugurated at the Justice Department a culture of Clinton-style damage control and managerial slipperiness. The fog has only thickened in succeeding years.

In May 1993, under Reno's nose, George Stephanopoulos ordered the FBI to alter a press release concerning potential "crimes" committed by the just-sacked White House travel-office staff. In the fall of 1993, Louis Freeh assumed the directorship of the FBI. He would soon promote his long-time crony Larry Potts to the bureau's number-two slot despite the fact that Potts had supervised the notorious 1992 Ruby Ridge shootout that left an innocent 14-year-old boy and his mother dead. At the time, Freeh's bureau vehemently denounced as "baseless" initial suggestions that there had been a coverup of its actions at Ruby Ridge. The FBI's E. Michael Kahoe has since pled guilty to felony obstruction-of-justice charges in

the matter; he admits having shredded a critical internal report on the operation. Potts is the target of a related federal grand jury probe.

As 1993 became 1994, the FBI cooperated in what bureau general counsel Howard Shapiro would later call a "massive invasion of privacy" perpetrated by White House staffer Craig Livingstone: the unjustified requisition and rifling of security-clearance files on 500 retired White House employees. The blind and cozy "deference" shown the White House during the Filegate caper, Shapiro wrote in his report, represented a "complete abdication of management responsibility" at the FBI. Louis Freeh swore it would never happen again.

But it did. In July 1996, barely a month after his Filegate report was released, Shapiro tipped off the White House that Livingstone's own security-clearance file indicated that Livingstone had originally been hired at the behest of no less an eminence than Hillary Clinton. Then Shapiro dispatched two representatives to grill the FBI agent who had noted this fact in Livingstone's file. Today, Shapiro is still on the job, despite having thus interfered in an independent-counsel investigation of possible criminal wrongdoing by some of the president's closest aides.

Last year, the FBI ruined the life of one Richard Jewell by publicly, repeatedly, and falsely identifying him as a suspect in the Atlanta Olympic bombing. No one has lost his job for *that*, either. Nor has anyone been disciplined at the Immigration and Naturalization Service, another arm of the Justice Department, which in 12 months ending last fall granted citizenship to 180,000 aliens who had not completed a background check. In the fall of 1995, Democratic activist groups had begun advising the White House that INS naturalization backlogs "represent thousands of potential voters" in "politically important states" and that high-level pressure on INS was necessary lest thousands of Latinos be prevented from "participating in the 1996 presidential election." So Vice President Gore's "reinventing government" task force dove into action, with a flurry of memos on the need to "lower the standards for citizenship" and thereby produce "a million new citizens before election day." At least 168 of those new citizens, it turns out, have serious criminal histories.

The catalogue is almost endless. The FBI, it now appears, has retaliated against a whistleblower in its still-unaccredited and obviously troubled crime lab—over the objections of Justice Department inspector general Michael Bromwich, who publicly accuses Louis Freeh of misleading Congress about the issue.

And through it all, as her "people's law firm" descends further into a muck of dysfunction and politicized sleaze, Janet Reno sleeps. She is widely

understood not to be in control of her department. She is President Clinton's worst major cabinet appointment.

So the question why he retains Reno as attorney general (and Louis Freeh as FBI director, who should by rights have been fired long ago) is an interesting one. The president is known to be increasingly displeased with both of them for their so-called independence from the White House—for their belated unwillingness to participate in the official administration "spin" on the Asia-money inquiry. In at least one recent case, the president has good reason to be upset. In advance of Secretary of State Albright's trip to China, White House counsel Charles Ruff asked for a full Justice briefing on the status of the department's Asia-gate investigation. Freeh rebuffed him—and, by extension, a request from the president of the United States for information central to an immediate foreign policy initiative. And Reno backed Freeh up.

If you were the president, you'd be annoyed, too. Enraged, even. But the operative theory in Washington is that Clinton, notwithstanding this provocation, cannot remove Reno or Freeh from office. It would "look bad." And it is safer for the president to have them "inside," as it were, than outside—giving witness against him—in private life.

No doubt. But that's not the real reason we have the miserable Justice Department we do, and why we're likely to have it for quite a while. Freeh and Reno are *not* fundamentally independent of the White House, as a closer look at the latest crosstown flap makes clear. The Justice Department believes it cannot support the president in the defense of American national security by telling him what it knows about Chinese involvement in controversial Democratic fund-raising last year. Justice cannot do so because it believes the White House cannot be trusted to keep the information secure from witnesses and targets of the investigation.

The Department of Justice has a major conflict of interest, in other words. But Janet Reno still refuses to acknowledge even the possibility of such a conflict. Which would require her, by law, to request the appointment of another independent counsel. Which is what Bill Clinton seems most to fear. And what the United States Senate would surely demand as a condition of confirmation from any new attorney general the president might conceivably nominate. So he simply won't nominate one.

In January, Clinton aide Rahm Emanuel gave an interview about Janet Reno to a correspondent from *Legal Times*. Emanuel is a former ballet dancer and campaign fund-raiser who for the past several years has held the Justice Department "portfolio" at the White House—and who, by all accounts, has managed

that portfolio very aggressively, bossing Justice staffers around at will. He and Reno, Emanuel said, have a “very good” working relationship. She is “secure enough to have involvement from me.” He meant this

as praise, evidently. It wasn’t. The attorney general is a doormat. And we’re stuck with her.

—David Tell, for the Editors

NEWT’S \$300,000 QUESTION

by Matthew Rees

ON HIS SUCCESSFUL TRIP TO CHINA, Newt Gingrich was treated as America’s second or third most important politician. Now that he’s back, the House speaker has resumed his less glorious role as Washington’s most famous deadbeat. Gingrich agreed to a \$300,000 fine in his settlement with the House Ethics Committee, and sometime in the next three months he’ll pay up. At the moment, he’s leaning toward a payment plan—he’d pay \$50,000, a legal defense fund would raise the rest—guaranteed to

touch off an anti-Newt firestorm in the media and Congress.

The least controversial option would

be for Gingrich to pay the \$300,000 out of his own pocket, but he doesn’t want to do this. For starters, he doesn’t have the money. Most of his \$470,000 in pre-tax earnings from the famous book deal (that saw him return a \$4.5 million advance) was used to buy a house in Marietta, Georgia. And though his annual salary is \$171,500, his most recent financial disclosure form put the value of Gingrich’s assets at between \$85,000 and \$262,000. He’s also got outstanding legal bills in excess of \$191,000. Another obstacle is Gingrich’s

wife, Marianne, who is fervently opposed to dipping into the family finances or taking out a loan to pay the fine.

But if Gingrich doesn't pay out of his own pocket, he will face a tidal wave of criticism. The argument will be that since he admitted mistakes, he should pay for them. Norman Ornstein, a congressional scholar at the American Enterprise Institute, highlights the problem: "Given that the charges against Gingrich involve manipulating the tax code, people will assume he's once again skirting the rules if he doesn't pay the fine himself." The Washington press corps, which loathes Gingrich, would say as much. So would House Democrats, led by Gingrich nemesis David Bonior.

Another problem could be Gingrich's GOP colleagues. The prevailing opinion among House Republicans is that Gingrich should pay out of his own funds even if it bankrupts him. They recognize that to do anything else would put the issue back in the spotlight, and few have the stomach to defend him against more ethics complaints. Many told me they would have been willing to cut Gingrich some slack—except that he agreed to pay the fine as part of his settlement with the Ethics Committee, and, they say, he can't look as if he's going back on this. Thus, Gingrich loyalist Rep. Chris Shays says that for Gingrich not to pay the \$300,000 personally would be "a serious mistake." How serious? "His days would be numbered" as speaker, says Shays, echoing the comments of many other House Republicans and Gingrich advisers.

Complicating Gingrich's position are some House Republicans who *don't* want him to pay out of his own pocket, for fear this would set a bad precedent. Rep. Joe Scarborough of Florida, a Gingrich critic, says that if members of Congress were henceforth expected to ante up personally for fines, many would be driven out of Washington. Scarborough acknowledges that "if remaining speaker is the most important thing in [Gingrich's] life, he'll pay the \$300,000 out of his own pocket." But it's a sign of Gingrich's weak position that Scarborough's concern over his own and other House members' possible exposure to ethics fines out-

weighs his concern for Gingrich's survival as speaker.

The potentially explosive payment plan currently in favor among Gingrich's inner circle—which includes representatives Dick Armey, Bill Paxon, and John Linder, Gingrich confidant Joe Gaylord, and Republican operative Ken Duberstein—would have the speaker contribute \$50,000 and a legal defense fund pick up the rest. That seems clever—but if Gingrich goes down that road he might as well keep his \$50,000 and have the legal defense fund make the whole payment. He won't get credit for contributing his own money, and doing so will be an admission there's something unseemly about having the legal defense fund pay the bill.

The legal defense fund idea is popular because President Clinton has one, thus presumably neutralizing attacks. Yet this overlooks the fact that Clinton's fund hasn't exactly been free of controversy and that there's a fundamental difference between the situations facing the speaker and the president: Gingrich has admitted wrongdoing, Clinton has not. Besides, paying through a legal defense fund still prompts the basic objection: Gingrich wouldn't be paying his own fine, which is what most Republicans and Democrats think he should do.

Gingrich is considering numerous other options, such as suing his former lawyer, Jan Baran, for malpractice (Baran's replacement, an Atlanta lawyer named J. Randolph Evans, specializes in professional liability) and paying the \$300,000 in increments. The one sure thing, however, is that whatever Gingrich does he will be criticized.

"He's damned if he does, damned if he doesn't," admits Scarborough. One option that would solve all of Gingrich's immediate problems—and relieve him of having to pay the \$300,000—would be for him to resign as speaker and quit the House. Extreme though that course might seem, it could be better than having his House colleagues make that decision for him.

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Gore Does China

by Thomas M. DeFrank

REPORTERS COVERING what they dubbed the Al Gore 1997 Worldwide Soft Money Refund Tour had just settled into their seats at Qinghua University to hear the vice president speak when they

were suddenly summoned back to their makeshift press room. Moments later, one of the more recognizable members of the Clinton administration popped through the door.

"Who are you?" a reporter asked. After a slight pause, he decided to be a senior administration official. As several news organizations later revealed, it was Al Gore himself.

Ever polite and low-key, the veep took issue with an Associated Press dispatch intimating he had wimped out in his talks with the Chinese. The story quoted a senior U.S. diplomat saying the administration wasn't going to let the strategic relationship with Beijing be derailed because of the alleged Chinese-government connection to the Clinton fund-raising scandals. This wasn't some vicious leak to embarrass Gore: It came from an official U.S. briefing.

Not so fast, Gore said. In his talks with Li Peng, the double-breasted assassin who masterminded the 1989 Tiananmen Square massacre, he'd been quite clear. The fund-raising charges were serious, he'd warned, and if they proved true, that could spell big trouble for Sino-American relations. This high-level damage control was too late. Reporters like Gore and usually give him the benefit of the doubt. But this time they chose to believe that the information they already had was just as credible as what they were now hearing.

From start to finish, the messy campaign-finance angle completely overshadowed the serious diplomacy of Gore's China trip and his creditable behind-the-

scenes performance in a tricky diplomatic role. What's more, this was a largely self-inflicted wound: Before and during the trip, Gore and his operators harmed themselves with a series of needless blunders. According to a senior Clinton aide who admires Gore a lot, "a toxic environment was created that made it impossible for him to succeed from a political standpoint."

Like most vice presidents, Gore doesn't draw much press on his travels. This was the first instance in which one of his overseas jaunts attracted anything near the turbocharged media scrutiny of a presidential campaign. It's early, but Team Gore decisively flunked its first major-league tryout.

Truth is, Gore and his handlers have been shell-shocked for weeks. Maybe they'd been lulled into complacency by four years of adoring media coverage. But that coverage changed after Gore and his aides got caught dissembling about what the veep knew—and when he knew it—about the now-famous Buddhist-temple fund-raiser he attended last April. The media meltdown accelerated after Gore's disastrous press conference last month, in which he tried to explain away phone calls asking fat cats for campaign contri-

butions with legalistic mumbo-jumbo. This trip didn't exactly turn things around with the press.

The stumbles began even before Air Force Two lifted off to Asia. For weeks, Gore aides had been telling reporters the veep would take a press plane to Asia. The White House Travel Office—the new and definitely not improved version—secured a plane from Rich Air. A week before takeoff, however, *60 Minutes* did an exposé of the charter firm's allegedly dubious safety record. For p.r. and safety concerns, Rich Air was history—and the next-best charter deal would have cost reporters \$26,000 a head. Predictably, the press-plane idea collapsed.

That launched a furious scramble among reporters to get on Gore's plane. Unable to accommodate everyone, his staff preemptorily changed the seating policy from first-come, first-served to serve the big guys first. Then they lied about what they were doing. Reporters who'd been assured of seats for weeks were told only four press seats were available. Suddenly, there were 10. And they all went to brand-name news organizations, several of which got interested in the trip only after Gore's press conference. Gore's handlers were so intent on sucking up to the top guns that the staffer who handled press advance was bumped from the trip to make room for the *Los Angeles Times*.

The result: A half-dozen reporters, quickly styled "the leper colony," had to chase Gore as best they could, an impossible task since no commercial airline can possibly duplicate Air Force Two's leave-when-you-like schedule. Such luminaries as Maureen Dowd of the *New York Times* missed Gore's side trips to Xian and Shanghai because they weren't in the cocoon. Not surprisingly, Dowd stuck it to Gore in her columns.

Gore's beleaguered press staff tried to make amends. Gore came to dinner one night with the A- and B-teamers and spent over an hour schmoozing off the record. At his press conference in Beijing, he recognized almost every reporter from the leper colony, even calling by name those he'd never met. The have-nots were also given some logistical help on the ground from U.S.-embassy and Gore staffers as they schlepped to and from airports. But it was too little, too late—reporters, like politicians, have long memories.

Having ensured that half the press entourage would arrive in Asia grumpy, the Gore brain trust proceeded to irk the favored half as well by closing a posterous number of events to press coverage. In the current culture of campaign-finance scandal, they were

so spooked by the image of Gore meeting with expatriate fat cats that they barred the press from four such meetings. The ridiculous explanation: These were working meetings, sort of like classified National Security Council sessions. To avoid photos of Gore reveling with his human-rights-impaired hosts, U.S. officials also persuaded the normally convivial Chinese to dispense with banquet toasts altogether. Gore used to be a reporter, but you couldn't tell by bonehead staff calls like these.

The *pièce de résistance* was a botched briefing on Gore's first day of talks in Beijing by Leon Fuerth, Gore's national security adviser. Fuerth has been with Gore for 13 years and is highly regarded by his boss. Reporters, however, say he views the media with disdain and has never been helpful to them. Fair or not, that image was compounded by what one reporter who knows him well termed a "belligerently useless" briefing. It didn't help that Fuerth innocently referred to the press corps as "clutter." Fuerth brought seven aides along to Asia, but apparently none of them understood an essential truth of media manipulation: First decide what you want the press to write, then give it to them and hope for the best.

Hammered by reporters for something to file, press spokeswoman Ginny Terzano by chance encountered a senior U.S.-embassy official in the lobby of the tony China World Hotel, where the Gore party was staying. She pressed him into coming down to the briefing room to help fill in some blanks for cranky reporters. Not used to the requirements of political spin, the official confirmed the worst-kept secret in Washington and Beijing: Strategic engagement with China is so important that even if the Chinese did try to influence U.S. policy by funneling illegal campaign contributions to members of Congress and the Clinton-Gore reelection, Clinton won't let that torpedo warmer Sino-American ties. Suddenly, reporters had their lead—the wrong one, by Gore's reckoning. "They should find a better national security adviser," said one unsympathetic journalist, "so they don't have to bring down an honest embassy official."

As the saying goes, Moses leaned on his staff—then he died. It's a lifetime until 2000, but the China trip demonstrated that, for now, the Gore team is nowhere near ready for prime time, much less a presidential campaign. Except, perhaps, for the Dole campaign.

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GORE'S STAFF PEREMPTORILY CHANGED POLICY TO SERVE THE BIG GUYS FIRST. THEN THEY LIED ABOUT IT.

QUOTA HIRES IN BLUE

by John A. Barnes

WHEN WILLIAM HAYDEN SCORED just 78.9 on the 1994 Nassau County, N.Y., police exam—a score that placed him more than 8,000 names down the list and well out of contention to be hired—he knew something was fishy. A former New York City police officer and a fire marshal on Long Island, Hayden had studied hard for the test. The low score rankled him. Refusing to just let it go, he took out an ad and asked to hear from similarly disgruntled test-takers.

The response surprised even Hayden. One fellow candidate, who received a 67 on the exam, was not only a serving village police officer on Long Island (and therefore already a graduate of the Nassau Police Academy), but held a master's degree and was working toward a law degree; another candidate, this one with an M.B.A., scored a 78; a Suffolk County probation

officer with a master's degree had an abysmal 64. Dozens of New York City police officers, many with distinguished service records in some of the city's toughest precincts, were

stunned to discover they were considered unqualified to patrol Nassau County.

What was worse was what Hayden was hearing about those who had done well on the test. They included, according to his sources, people with exceedingly poor academic and work records, as well as some who refused to be drug-tested. What had happened?

Hayden, as it turns out, was correct in his suspicion that something was wrong with the test. For as Linda Gottfredson, a University of Delaware education professor who analyzed the validation criteria that were used to grade the test, commented, the Nassau exam constitutes “a case study in racially gerrymandering the content of a test.”

Says Hayden, “What was done with this test is a disgrace. It's a national scandal.” It certainly ought to be.

Nassau County, the suburb just east of New York City on Long Island, is one of the most desirable places in the world to be a police officer. Amidst its suburban sprawl of green lawns and quiet subdivisions, crime rates are extremely low. And police pay is extremely high, with the average Nassau officer taking home as much as \$18,000 more per year than his counterpart in New York City. With working conditions like these, it is scarcely surprising that when the county offered its first police test in seven years in 1994, more than 32,000 hopefuls applied for perhaps 500 vacancies spread over the next four to six years.

But, as might have been guessed, there's trouble in paradise. For nearly two decades before the 1994 exam, the county was embroiled in litigation with the U.S. Department of Justice, which had repeatedly accused Nassau of using a civil-service test biased in favor of white males. The county finally threw in the towel in 1990 and signed a consent decree with the Bush Justice Department. The county and the feds would jointly design a new, "job-related" police exam. Four years and \$3 million later, this is the test that was administered to Hayden and the others.

No doubt the county figured that with the feds co-designing the test, there was no way they could object to the results. If so, the county hadn't figured on the creativity of the quota police.

The test—which was supposed to eliminate "disparate impact" from the get-go—apparently failed in its purpose. So, to grasp the Holy Grail of an examination that passes equal percentages of whites and blacks, Nassau and the Justice Department manipulated the content of the test after it had been administered. The scoring process simply stripped the test of 16 of its 25 parts, the ones that (coincidentally) measured the ability to reason, think inferentially, and exercise judgment—just the qualities that are necessary to perform virtually any mid- to high-level job satisfactorily, and especially that of a police officer. The validators retained a token reading-comprehension section, but the bar was set so low—candidates had merely to be able to read as well as the worst 1 percent of incumbent police officers—as to be virtually meaningless.

Why was this done? The validation report itself, on page 86, states baldly that cognitive testing was rejected "in the interest of minimizing adverse impact." In other words, "Blacks do not do as well as whites on such tests, so we'll simply ignore the results."

What was retained? A series of test sections that are said to measure personality and temperament along the lines of "openness to experience" and "achievement motivation." While the county has refused to divulge the test questions or the answer key,

a flavor can be gleaned from these two questions, which were reproduced in the validation report: *When you were in high school, were you a member of a sports team?* A. Yes B. No. *Which of the two statements is most like you—A or B?* A: *I'm always in a hurry at work to get things done.* B: *At work, I think of myself as part of a smooth-running machine.*

After Gottfredson published her findings in the *Wall Street Journal* last October, then-assistant attorney general for civil rights Deval Patrick replied with an exceedingly tendentious letter in which he refused to rebut the professor's arguments in detail. He blandly asserted, without offering evidence, that the Nassau test would "improve the police department." Patrick then added the scurrilous (and totally false) charge that Gottfredson had a financial interest in discrediting the Nassau test.

The likely upshot? As Gottfredson herself noted, the consequences of dumbing-down police tests are already well known. Not only are many poorly qualified minorities likely to be hired, so will many poorly qualified whites. That is exactly what happened in New York City in the 1980s when, as a Koch-administration official famously blurted out, a "functional illiterate" could pass the police exam. This was the era of the hiring of Michael Dowd, the notorious cocaine-dealer cop, and Kevin Nannery, who led a rogue posse of officers dubbed "Nannery's Raiders." It was to prevent the hiring of the likes of Dowd and Nannery that Mayor Rudolph Giuliani moved to greatly toughen both the mental and physical standards that new city police officers are expected to meet. In other words, New York City is moving in the direction opposite from that of Nassau.

Not that the city is likely to get away with it for long, however. Remember those "100,000 new cops on the beat" that President Clinton bragged so tirelessly about during last year's campaign? If the Nassau result is allowed to stand, it is safe to say that it will be used as a yardstick with which to beat local jurisdictions into what amounts to quota hiring, in exchange for the money to hire new police officers. Indeed, the Justice Department is already subjecting neighboring Suffolk County, N.Y., which just administered a police test of its own, to a "compliance review."

Hayden and 67 co-plaintiffs, represented by the conservative Atlantic Legal Foundation, filed suit in federal district court March 24. In the meantime, however, Congress should investigate. If the bizarre goings-on in Nassau County are not challenged, then Congress will be buying quota hiring at the price of public safety.

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UNMOLESTED MOLESTORS

How the FBI Is Ignoring and Mishandling a Major Child-Pornography Investigation

By Tod Lindberg

For three years now, the Federal Bureau of Investigation has been running an undercover operation called “Innocent Images” that targets people who use computers to traffic in child pornography—and the results have been oddly reassuring. Innocent Images has nabbed over 70 people so far, from time to time generating headlines about the arrest of a truly vile perpetrator. But given the explosive growth in online services and Internet use—some put the number of users at 20 to 30 million—the number seems very small. And that, in turn, seems to vindicate those who argue that the problem of online smut has been overstated.

Kiddie porn is more than just smut. Its very existence has been deemed a crime by Congress; its possession and dissemination are both point-blank illegal. It is a crime to distribute it—an act defined by law as the exchange of even a single image, regardless of whether money is involved—and to own it. A first offense can draw a maximum sentence of 15 years; a second offense, 30. The law allows the justice system to come down with full force on those who find it stimulating to look at pictures of children having sex with other children, performing sex acts on adults, engaged in sex acts with animals, depicted in scenes of bondage and sadomasochism, and the like. The material in question is so disturbing that even such First Amendment stalwarts as officials of the American Civil Liberties Union routinely call for vigorous prosecution of traffickers in kiddie porn.

At congressional hearings and elsewhere, FBI officials proudly recount their efforts to bring kiddie-porn perpetrators to justice through Innocent Images. From the start of Innocent Images in 1994 through mid-March of this year, the bureau has had 183 search warrants executed that have led to 88 arrests and over

70 convictions.

But that’s not the real story of Innocent Images. In truth, the FBI has nothing to brag about. Rather, it should be hanging its head in shame, because its conduct in the Innocent Images investigation has been nothing short of a scandal, a gross dereliction of duty deserving of congressional hearings and mass firings. For it turns out the FBI has caught a lot more than 70 kiddie-porn traffickers in its net, and is allowing them to slip through. According to congressional and other sources, FBI personnel have acknowledged that, in fact, the bureau has so far compiled a database of 4,000 names from Innocent Images. In every one of these 4,000 cases, the bureau has solid evidence of distribution of child pornography online.

Data from the U.S. Customs Service offer a telling contrast. Customs, too, runs undercover kiddie-porn investigations involving online services and the Internet because it has authority to investigate the use of any foreign-made products for illegal purposes. Since October 1, 1996, Customs has managed 55 convictions—more than 75 percent of the FBI’s total in less than a third of the time.

What are the nation’s top law enforcers—the FBI itself, the Justice Department in Washington, the 94 U.S. Attorney’s offices throughout the country—doing about these 4,000 people, each of whom, if convicted, would almost certainly face serious prison time? Well, nothing much—and on purpose.

Here’s how Innocent Images works, according to sources present at a closed-door briefing the FBI gave congressional staff on February 13. An agent goes online via a service provider (America Online especially) and seeks out “chat rooms” where kiddie porn appears to be a topic of discussion. The agent makes known an interest in the subject and asks for others

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with similar interests to send electronic files of images to an e-mail address the agent is using as a drop box. Then it's just a matter of checking the e-mail to see what comes in and from whom. (FBI personnel did exactly this at the February briefing, showing congressional staff a couple of new kiddie-porn pictures that had just been received as part of Innocent Images at the FBI's electronic mailbox.) Upon receipt of an image, which comes with the "username" of the person sending it, the FBI presents a subpoena to America Online seeking the real name and address of the sender. "AOL keeps records of credit card numbers, names and addresses," according to the written notes of a source who attended the briefing. "The FBI then only has to issue subpoenas for records." Thus, a database is born. To take the matter farther, as in the case of those actually prosecuted, investigators can use the information they have gathered thus far to seek a search warrant. When they get it, they can search the suspect's home and seize the computer to conduct a forensic examination of its contents.

The FBI is careful to stay away from entrapment—and to avoid falling into the distribution of child pornography itself. In some instances, for example, persons with whom the FBI makes contact will respond to a request for kiddie porn images by saying, in effect, show me yours and *then* I'll show you mine. The FBI won't do it, and thus won't pursue that individual further. The implication, therefore, is that the FBI's 4,000-name database constitutes only the least subtle and most eager segment of the kiddie porn universe: those willing to hand over an image to a total stranger, apparently in the mistaken belief that the online world actually offers genuine anonymity.

How many more people are sufficiently cautious to avoid the FBI by waiting to receive an image from another user before they send one? And how many more still have realized that AOL and the other online service providers are particularly porous to law-enforcement authorities with subpoenas? As the FBI briefers explained, "There are many more Internet providers [but with them,] identify[ing] the predator and serving a search warrant becomes much more difficult. For example, [Company X], an Internet server, gives a user a new identification number for every sign-on. It is therefore impossible to track the system for distributors."

The federal prosecutions stemming from Innocent Images to date "have been of white men around the age of 40," according to the notes. "Many of the people convicted under the investigation are first time offenders. . . . 98% of those individuals pled guilty. There have been two suicides. These people have been

lawyers, police officers, principals. Generally, they are well educated and employed."

In addition, those selected for prosecution would seem to be only the most egregious and conspicuous of kiddie-porn offenders. The bureau's investigation "targets forwarders and redistributors of child pornography."

This, of course, begs the question: What about the rest? The real starting point in trying to figure out how many kiddie-porn aficionados are out there and doing something about them ought to be the 4,000-name database—and even that is only a beginning. Unfortunately, the FBI, for whatever reasons, seems to have decided to take the 4,000 names and cull for the most blatant cases (the ones easiest to make, perhaps?) instead of using the 4,000 names as a point of departure for an investigation that could potentially net many more offenders.

This is no accident. Sources describe the FBI protocols governing Innocent Images cases as designed apparently with very different goals in mind. The initial protocols called for evidence of 10 separate instances of distribution by a particular individual before the FBI would seek to prosecute. Sources say the number is now three—though, by law, one is enough. It may be that investigators are looking for "jury appeal"—evidence that will hit jurors over the head like a two-by-four. But, as it happens, most of these cases end in plea bargains, anyway. Another problem area is that some U.S. Attorneys are more receptive toward cases of this kind than others; some are overly cautious, whether as a result of the disagreeableness of the evidence in these cases, unfamiliarity with the law, or for other reasons.

The most startling fact of all may be this: To handle these 4,000 potential cases, the FBI has . . . three agents working full-time. Until recently, there was only one. The bureau has 81 people working in congressional relations and public affairs.

The agents themselves deserve praise, obviously, for generating enough material to build 4,000 separate cases against perpetrators most of whom were hitherto unknown to law enforcement. But the FBI and the Justice Department and the Clinton administration seem utterly uninterested in doing anything about it.

What they mainly seem interested in doing now, however, is denying the massive scope of the evidence they have amassed and are sitting on—in an effort to avoid embarrassment over the inaction. Charles Grassley, Iowa Republican and chairman of a Senate Judiciary subcommittee, sent a letter March 27 to FBI director Louis Freeh asking specifically for "the precise number of names in this database; how those

names came to be included in the database; why the names included in the database are not being further investigated; [and] any ‘threshold’ requirements to launch an investigation for sending computerized child pornography.” Grassley was asking Freeh to provide, in writing, what FBI briefers had already told congressional staff. One can only imagine the scramble within the FBI and the office of the deputy attorney general, to whom the FBI director reports, as Grassley’s April 3 deadline for reply came and went. Freeh finally replied late the next day. His letter, replete with FBI procedural boilerplate, pointedly answered none of Grassley’s questions.

It’s time to get back to basics. Trafficking in kiddie porn is a serious crime. Nor is this a matter for some neat distinction between “mere” images and the act of child molestation. What we are talking about is photographs of *real* acts of molestation. They have been recorded on film for use by those whose demand for this material can only lead to more instances of molestation in the effort to meet that demand. And law-enforcement authorities know of at least 4,000 people willing to distribute these images for the asking.

Notwithstanding certain fringe views on the subject, most Americans react to child pornography with visceral repulsion. And with fear—for their own children and grandchildren, for the children of their friends and loved ones, and even on behalf of the anonymous children on whom unspeakable horrors are being inflicted for the purpose of feeding the appetite out there for material of this, the worst, sort.

Four thousand names. Is the real problem with this database, then, its very success? Is it just *too many* people? Too many to assimilate, internalize, deal with, process, let alone act upon? Are people running smack into this mountain of data and saying, “Oh, so many, we had better concentrate on the really bad ones,” when, in fact, they are *all* really bad ones? Are we now going to define deviancy down, in Sen. Daniel Patrick Moynihan’s famous phrase, to allow trafficking in child pornography so long as it is not done to excess?

Or is somebody going to do something about the 4,000? It’s hard to imagine how the reaction from ordinary Americans to such an initiative would be anything other than a resounding cheer. Indeed, given what we know about offenders of this kind, it’s hard to

imagine you wouldn't have more than 3,000 guilty pleas within 24 hours of the 4,000 arrests. And the cooperation that would ensue from the plea bargainers would probably yield a list of some thousands of hitherto unknown others with similar appetites. This is not symbolic; on the contrary, it would be devastating to the trade in child pornography.

To be sure, resources are tight. But that's an excuse. Mainly what we have is a lack of resolve at the highest levels of law enforcement. People who, when they open the gate to the devil's playground and see that his name is Legion—that he has 4,000 demons, not a more manageable 400 or 40 or 4—close the gate quickly and walk away before someone sees them. ♦

OSLO IS DEAD

The Peace Process Is Over—Time to Save the Peace

By Charles Krauthammer

Y oung Palestinians throwing stones at Israeli soldiers. Israelis responding with tear gas and rubber bullets. Firebombs thrown at Israeli vehicles. Terrorist bombs going off in Tel Aviv.

As these scenes of murder and mayhem are endlessly replayed, we are told in solemn voiceover that the Middle East is back to the days of the intifada. Not quite. There is one large difference, hardly noticed and hardly mentioned. These Palestinians throwing stones and hurling firebombs are not living under occupation. The single most misunderstood fact about the Middle East today is that of the 2,300,000 Palestinians living in Gaza and the West Bank, 2,250,000 live under the rule of Yasser Arafat and the Palestinian Authority. Of the Palestinians who were formerly under Israeli rule, 98 percent now live under Palestinian rule.

Ten years ago, the world experienced an outpouring of sympathy and support for these stone-throwing youths because they were living under occupation. Well, they no longer are. They have long ago had their wild ceremonies celebrating their liberation from Israeli occupation. Nonetheless, the Western sympathy they enjoyed seems not to have abated.

Why exactly are these young men throwing stones and firebombs? Answer: Because they are unhappy with what is happening *outside* their liberated zones. Specifically, they are protesting Israel's building Jewish housing in East Jerusalem. They are also protesting Israel's latest territorial concession. The Jewish

state gave them only 9 percent of the relatively empty land remaining in the West Bank rather than the 30 percent Yasser Arafat says he is entitled to.

Thus the violence you see on your TV screen is not the work of an unjustly occupied people wanting to be free. It is the work of an already freed people trying to storm demarcation lines solemnly established by their own leadership to separate their territory from Israel's. Their aim is to attack Israeli soldiers and civilians on the Israeli side of the line as a way of protesting Israeli policies elsewhere. Were the Israeli soldiers not to fire back with tear gas and rubber bullets, these mobs would overrun the Israeli areas—in Hebron, for example—and no doubt kill and expel their Jewish inhabitants.

These are not Gandhi's Indians rising up against the Raj. The better analogy is Mexicans storming the border crossings at Tijuana, attacking American police and civilians with stones and firebombs to protest U.S. government actions in, say, Los Angeles.

It is important to understand that Palestinian violence is coming from a self-governing people. Otherwise, one cannot understand what the current turmoil is all about. Ten years ago, there was a great debate among Israelis whether or not to hold on, brave the intifada, and rule the Palestinians. There was a great debate whether or not to annex the land the Palestinians lived on and create a Greater Israel. There was a great debate whether or not to grant the Palestinians the essentials of sovereignty over the places they inhabit.

Those debates are over. The Left won. Greater

Contributing editor Charles Krauthammer has won the Pulitzer Prize for his weekly newspaper column.

Israel is dead. The Palestinians rule themselves. The only remaining argument between Israel and the Palestinians is over territory that is largely uninhabited. Like the Har Homa area in East Jerusalem, an entirely barren hill between two Jewish neighborhoods. Like the so-called Areas B and C, the relatively empty areas that Israel has promised in the Hebron agreement to turn over in part to Palestinian rule in three phased withdrawals.

The Israeli-Palestinian conflict has entered a historic, final stage. After a hundred years of war, the major political questions have been settled. The Jews have their own state. And the Palestinians have their own quasi-state that is destined, as no one doubts, to be sovereign Palestine. All that is unsettled is the size and boundaries of the two entities.

We are now entering the final battle for the disposition of the largely uninhabited lands between them. That is what the rock-throwing, the firebombing, and the terrorist attacks are about. The battle for the Jordan Valley, the Judean desert, and Jerusalem has begun.

II

After the start of the intifada in the late 1980s, but before the Oslo Peace Accords of 1993, there was a curious faction in the raging Israeli debate over the occupied territories. These were the unilateralists. These Israelis argued that Israel should simply get up from Gaza and the major cities of the West Bank and leave. Unilateral withdrawal, with nothing in return.

Why? A unilateral approach would solve two problems. First, it would relieve the strain on Israel's nerves and the stain on Israel's conscience of occupying a people who obviously did not want to be ruled by Jews. This was a far more serious argument for Israelis than most people have understood. Indeed, of all the reasons Israel did finally leave Gaza and the inhabited parts of the West Bank, this was perhaps the most powerful: Israelis could not stand the role of occupier. There are many peoples on the planet for whom occupier is a welcome, indeed coveted, vocation. Not for Jews.

The second reason for leaving was to resolve Israel's great dilemma—the contradiction between the democratic and the Jewish nature of Israel posed by the forced incorporation of 2.3 million reluctant, recalcitrant Palestinians. Either they had to be disenfranchised, in which case Israel would cease to be democ-

ratic. Or they would be enfranchised, in which case a demographically overwhelmed Israel would cease to be Jewish. How to cut the Gordian knot? Free these people and let them rule themselves.

The argument against the unilateralists was quite obvious: How could you give up such a big prize for nothing? Yes, said the critics, we want to be relieved of the occupation. Yes, unilateral withdrawal solves the democratic vs. Jewish state problem. But after all, the Palestinians don't just want to be free and independent. They want to throw the Jews into the sea. Why not offer them a deal: Offer them the former want as an inducement for giving up the latter.

Which is the origin and meaning of the peace process undertaken in the 1993 Oslo agreements. Yitzhak Rabin and Shimon Peres decided to take the fateful step of giving up the occupation and establishing the seeds of what would undoubtedly be a Palestinian state in return for the Palestinians' giving up their war against the Jews.

That was the great bargain of Oslo. That was what Rabin offered that the unilateralists never could. And that is why he was able to command a majority, if a slim and skeptical majority, for carrying out Oslo.

Before Oslo, the PLO had a very clear end and very clear means. The end, spelled out repeatedly in the Palestinian National Charter, was the destruction of Israel and its replacement with a Palestinian state. And the means were "armed struggle," meaning violence and terrorism against Israel.

The essence of the Oslo agreements was PLO renunciation of both these ends and these means. It pledged to recognize Israel and change its charter to abolish all references to the destruction of Israel. And it pledged solemnly to abandon all violence or threats of violence as a means to achieve its ends.

Three-and-a-half years after Oslo, it is clear that what Rabin and Peres thought they had obtained for their withdrawal was nothing but air. After three-and-a-half years, Arafat has not changed his charter. Indeed, when last asked about changing it, he replied that he would do it when Israel adopts a constitution. (Israel, like Britain, has an unwritten constitution.) This was as contemptuous and dismissive a way as he could find to say: "Don't bother me with such trivialities."

As for violence, the last 14 days have shown that all of Arafat's promises about violence were merely provisional. So long as Israel was withdrawing at the correct

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pace, he was willing to call off his dogs. But as soon as he found that he was not getting what he wanted at the pace he wanted, he was ready to turn the violence back on.

His intentions have been quite open. He has made clear in speech after speech that Oslo is just a means to a Palestinian state with Jerusalem as its capital, and that if Oslo doesn't get him to what he wants, then he has other means. We know what the other means are. Why, his own aides have admitted that Arafat's Fatah faction has been organizing the anti-Israel rioting of the last two weeks.

Less subtly, as soon as Israel started building around Har Homa in Jerusalem, Arafat began meeting with Hamas leaders and releasing from prison well-known terrorists. Not surprisingly, in the subsequent two weeks, Palestinians have launched three terrorist attacks, leaving dead and dismembered Israelis in Tel Aviv, and dead Palestinians in Gaza, site of two bungled attacks on a schoolbus carrying Jewish children.

Rabin and Peres did not set out to be unilateralists. But they ended up being so. Israel gave up Gaza, Qalqilya, Jenin, Nablus, Ramallah, Bethlehem, Jericho, and 80 percent of Hebron. They freed 98 percent of the Palestinian population and put them under the rule of Yasser Arafat. And in return Israel got nothing. The promise to change the Palestinian end of destroying Israel is not even on the agenda. And the promise of abolishing the Palestinian means of violence is mocked in the streets every day.

III

From the Israeli point of view the process has proved to be a cruel hoax. Yet astonishingly, in most of the Western press and in practically all the chancelleries, the destruction of Oslo is being laid at the feet of Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu. Exhibit A is Har Homa. Exhibit B is the withdrawal that Netanyahu offered on March 7 under the Hebron accords, but that Arafat has rejected as inadequate.

Consider Har Homa, routinely cited as a violation of Oslo. Under Oslo, Jerusalem is clearly excluded from whatever restrictions exist on Israeli action in the West Bank and Gaza. Arafat was never granted veto over where Jews may live in Jerusalem. No Israeli government would ever have acceded to that. Yitzhak Rabin never did. He permitted Jewish housing to be

built in East Jerusalem. Even Shimon Peres has declared that "there are no limits on building in the Jerusalem area."

Or consider Exhibit B, Netanyahu's announced withdrawal from 9 percent of West Bank territory. The State Department, which was deeply involved in drafting the withdrawal protocol as part of the Hebron agreement, quite definitively declared the 9-percent plan fully compliant with Israeli obligations. State called it "a serious expansion of Palestinian authority" and "a demonstration of Israel's commitment to the peace process."

Nonetheless, Arafat sent his stone-throwers into the street because he says Israel should have given him

not 9, but 30 percent. But there is nothing in Oslo that says anything about 30 percent—or any percent, for that matter. Arafat made that number up out of thin air. Why? Because Israel pledged to make three withdrawals before the beginning of so-called "final status negotiations" over Jerusalem and borders. If Arafat gets 30 percent in each of the three withdrawals, that would give him 90 percent. And 90 added to what he already has now would give him practically all of the

West Bank and Gaza before negotiations over such sensitive issues as Jerusalem even begin.

Now, Arafat would obviously like Israel to disarm itself preemptively before final status negotiations. But to claim that Israel's refusal to do so is a violation of Oslo is the height ofchutzpah. And for the Western press to echo this absurd claim is the height of ignorance.

In the eyes of the world, however, when Netanyahu is not actually violating Oslo, he is constantly "pre-empting" it. The *Economist*, for example, reflecting a view typical of the Western press, charges that "pre-empting negotiations . . . Netanyahu has declared that he sees the Palestinians as getting no more than half the West Bank." Yet Arafat repeatedly declares that he demands all of the West Bank and half of Jerusalem. This is apparently not preemption, merely the presentation of a bargaining position. Why, then, when Netanyahu states his position regarding Israel's ultimate objectives, is this "preemption"?

Similarly, consider this in the *Financial Times* (Julie Dempsey, March 22-23): "What particularly frustrates the Palestinians is that Mr. Netanyahu . . . has drawn up his own maps and territorial boundaries for the final settlement. 'This is not a negotiation. It is a fait

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accompli,' says Mr. [Saeb] Erekat, the chief Palestinian negotiator."

What kind of double standard is this? The Palestinians flaunt their map of Palestine all the time. Sometimes, when their guard is down, they show the one with Israel wiped off. Otherwise, it is their Palestinian state, sovereign over the West Bank, Gaza, and East Jerusalem. But when Israel shows its map—Netanyahu's, for example, shows Israel retaining the Jordan Valley as a security buffer—this is called a negation of negotiations.

This is why the Oslo peace process is dying: It has ceased to have any meaning except what Arafat says it means on a given day. Worse, the West not only accepts, it echoes this Alice-in-Wonderland it-means-what-I-say-it-means Oslo. The real Oslo, the written Oslo, is dead, as dead as the famous Cairo accords Arafat once signed with the Lebanese government (when Arafat ruled Beirut and the Lebanese were desperate for peace). Cairo was not worth the paper it was written on. Neither is Oslo.

IV

The farce that is Oslo was most dramatically exposed at the Arab League meeting in Cairo, March 30-31, in which the Arabs voted to reinstate their economic boycott on Israel because of Israel's alleged violation of Oslo.

The economic normalization that is now being withdrawn—a trade office in Qatar here, a mission to Tunisia there—had been painstakingly granted by the Arabs over the last three and a half years of Oslo. These paltry gestures had been made in calibrated response to Israel's withdrawals from West Bank territory and its grants of power to the Palestinian Authority under Yasser Arafat.

This is territory and power that Israel will never be able to reclaim. But now that there is a halt in the peace process, the normalization of relations that had been granted Israel is to be withdrawn. Rarely has the peace process been exposed so clearly as a transaction in which what one side gives is real, while the other side gives ephemera.

The Cairo summit illuminated an even odder asymmetry at the heart of the Middle East peace process. In normal negotiations, you give A and the other fellow gives B. In the Middle East peace process, however, Israel gives A and the Arabs give B—subject to the withdrawal of B if Israel does not proceed to give C, D, and E. Israel receives a quid pro quo not for the actual things it cedes *but for the process of ceding*. Israel is rewarded, in other words, not for the distance

it has traveled—it gets no credit for *having* given—but for the velocity at which it is traveling. So long as it continues to travel toward the Arab position, so long as it continues to give, week by week, month by month, more and more territory and more and more power to the Palestinians, the Arabs will tolerate a few trade missions and Israeli tourists. But let Israel pause along the path of giving—or, as Netanyahu has done, begin to outline those things, such as Jerusalem, that Israel will not give up—and the credit Israel thought it had built with the Arabs for the concessions they have already pocketed vanishes.

V

Oslo is a process in which Israel is rewarded with temporary gifts for its process of retreat. So long as the retreat is in progress, everyone is happy. But if the retreat even pauses, all hell breaks loose.

This is obviously an intolerable situation. No negotiation can continue on this basis. The only way to save the "peace process" now is to short-circuit it. The endless process of Israel's giving while Arafat collects, complains, demands more, and waves the gun, is now at an end. The only way that the peace process can be saved is to skip the remaining interim steps and begin final status negotiations now.

The peace process that was supposed to have built confidence between the two sides has instead bred distrust. The Palestinians are frustrated because they want more and faster. The Israelis are shocked to discover that with intifada and terrorism all around, the vaunted peace deal turns out to be nothing more than unilateral retreat.

Such a process has no future. For the American "peace team" in the State Department, however, the process seems to have become life itself, a kind of permanent transition to an ever-receding final settlement, an endless state of negotiation whose permanence is not just necessary, owing to the complexity of the issues, but useful because it puts off the final reckoning.

The reckoning is here. The moment of truth for all parties, including the American side, is at hand. The conceit of the Israelis and the Americans at the beginning of Oslo was that because Jerusalem and final borders were such difficult issues, they would be kicked into the future. Well, the future is now.

The very idea of final status negotiations means an end to this endless process. With final status negotiations, Israel will finally stop giving and the Palestinians and the Arabs will finally, upon signing, have to stop demanding.

Of course, that is what Arafat cannot abide. He thrives in a situation in which Israel is required to be in a constant state of retreat. That is why he is resisting final status negotiations so fiercely. But the retreat is eventually going to stop at a certain point. The location of that point had best be decided now.

Jordan's King Hussein, who is nothing if not a realist, is open to the idea of jumping to final status negotiations. The question is whether the Clinton

administration can give up its cherished peace process—a process that insulated it from having to grapple with the final issues of Jerusalem and borders—and sign on too.

It must. Oslo is beyond saving, but peace still has a chance. If you want to see what is left of Oslo, look at the rioters in the streets of Ramallah and the dead in the cafés of Tel Aviv. The alternative to final status negotiations now is not Oslo, but war. ♦

THE TRUTH ISN'T OUT THERE

Why Is a Reputable Publishing Firm Bringing Out a Book that Alleges an Interstellar Sex Conspiracy?

By Matt Labash

Thumb through Simon & Schuster's preview of its fall and winter offerings and you quickly see why the publishing behemoth is our most cherished repository of middlebrow eclecticism. There's William J. Bennett with a new collection from our founding fathers on such matters as "civility" and "piety." Tommy Tune is offering "the uncensored story of his life" (pass the salsa, he's naming names). And there's tamer fare like *Sugarbaker's Cookie Cutter Cookbook*, *The Golf of Your Dreams*, and *The Threat: The Secret Alien Agenda*, in which a "distinguished historian and UFO researcher . . . exposes the aliens' alarming agenda: to create a breed of alien-human 'hybrids' who eventually will colonize and control the earth."

Say *what*? Don't panic. Simon & Schuster knows what it's doing. "It's not a schlocky book, despite the provocative thesis," says Fred Hills, the editor of *The Threat*. "What interested me was that this was a serious academic professor who . . . rigorously tested the reports of [people who claim to have been abducted by space aliens] against psychological categories that could otherwise discredit them."

Author David Jacobs, Ph.D., is nothing if not "rigorous," according to Hills, whose previous authors include Pulitzer prize winners, Nobel laureates, and Don Imus. Hills used the word "rigorous" four more times in the course of an interview. But despite the

preview guide's hype, Jacobs is not a terribly distinguished historian. He is an associate professor of history at Temple University, and all three of his books to date have been on the subject of UFOs. His first was a generally well-received history of the movement in the 1970s. His second (also published by Simon & Schuster), 1992's *Secret Life: Firsthand Documented Accounts of UFO Abductions*, was a bit more tenuous, as all of the data were gleaned through his use of hypnosis on 39 subjects (Jacobs has no formal training in hypnotherapy, psychology, or psychiatry). But that didn't stop *Kirkus Reviews* from extolling his "solid scholarship."

Talking about alien abductions is no longer solely the bailiwick of comet-watching suicide cults, undersexed basement-bound sci-fi enthusiasts, and *National Examiner* cover girls who claim they've been transported away on a beam of light and returned to earth with their bras on backwards. Alien abduction is a billion-dollar secular religion: from the Barnes & Noble racks to the Learning Annex curricula, from the Learning Channel's "Alien Invasion Week" to the hundreds of alien-centric films proliferating since the term "flying saucer" was coined in 1947, to the seven television series that currently flirt with the topic, the Truth Is No Longer Out There. Now, the Truth Is Showing Up In The Gross National Product.

Entire towns are propped up by the alien industry (Roswell, New Mexico, pop. 45,000, harvests \$5 mil-

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lion a year from its UFO museums and paraphernalia). Some companies even offer abduction insurance—with double indemnity for forced conjugal relations. A 1996 *Newsweek* poll showed 48 percent of all Americans believe in UFOs, and 29 percent think we have had alien contact. With all this interstellar action, there are, of course, some folks eager to make a quick buck off the business through cynical manipulation. But Jacobs isn't one of them, and neither is the respected house of Simon & Schuster. Hills assures me that even though there are scores of "untrustworthy" UFO books "that are not rigorous in the examination of the evidence . . . Jacobs, to my mind was the one exception."

So off I went to meet the world's preeminent UFOlogist in his 19th-century Philadelphia home. With glasses, a brillo pad of gray hair, a fuzzy sweater'n' Dockers ensemble, and a gap in his teeth that all work to make him look like a light-comedic version of himself, Jacobs leads me to his third-floor study which, after his 30 years in the business, contains enough UFO books to stock several municipal libraries.

He immediately displays his command of the subject when I walk past a boxed alien lifeform holding in his hand what looks to be a cobalt-blue bocci ball. Jacobs says a toy company sent it to him so he could comment on its realism. "And the answer," he snaps crisply, "is it's not." Everything is wrong, I learn in a crash-course exegesis on alien facial features and bone structure. Based on the "thousands of descriptions" we have, Jacobs asserts with absolute certainty that the shoulders are too broad, their necks are not wrinkled, they don't have a waist, they have vestigial mouths, and as any idiot knows, the hands and fingers "should be long and thin."

Sure, past abductees have said under hypnosis that alien hands were three webbed fingers and a thumb, had feathers, or were "clawlike." But, he says, you shouldn't believe what the abductees tell you at the outset, because "they're all over the place in the first two sessions."

We adjourn to the hypnosis room, where Jacobs conducts all his interviews (some 700 so far, of 114 subjects). Out of the gate, he assures me that although his thesis sounds "pretty crazy," he is not crazy like the other crazies. He's not like his friend, Harvard's John Mack, whose 1994 book *Abduction* was much discussed. "If you want to see bad scholarship," Jacobs says of the man who wrote the introduction to his 1992 book, "read him." He's not like that nutjob Whitley Strieber, who detailed his own abduction in

the 1987 bestseller *Communion*. Strieber had "some hits, but many misses" in his descriptions of life Out There (Jacobs has never been abducted himself), though Strieber still pocketed a \$1 million advance, had his book turned into a movie, and later claimed that the aliens were giving him material for his next book when they could get a telepathic word in edgewise (since he admitted hearing voices when no one was around).

Jacobs even disparages the faithful that he encounters at UFO conventions. "When you walk through the book exhibits and people are standing around with pyramids on their heads, I just cringe," he says.

So why is he here, insisting that aliens have been pirating our physiology with the goal of colonization, as they steal our ova and milk our sperm to create a hybrid species which looks part alien, part human—like a hydrocephalic version of supermodel Iman?

That's easy, he says: "I have to be intellectually honest, and this is where the evidence leads me." The "evidence," he freely admits, is the weakest form: anecdotal, and collected under hypnotic regression at that. Hypnosis has been used to retrieve abduction memories since the first high-profile reported abductions in the '60s. The technique is necessary, according to abduction doctrine, because the aliens supposedly alter human consciousness to hide their tracks. Jacobs is brutally aware of the disparate swipes from quibbling skeptics, and purports to have debunked the debunkers' common allegations—that his subjects are lying, repressing abuse, have fantasy-prone personalities, or are suffering from hallucinations, psychoses, psychogenic fugue states, temporal lobe dysfunctions, or a laundry list of other disorders.

The stock criticism, borne out by numerous experiments by trained clinicians, is that subjects will confabulate under hypnosis, making things up at the interviewer's prompting, fashioning details from dreams, imagination, or out of the cultural ether, which can later be processed as a conscious memory. (Jacobs often talks about how memory is stored. Though he's a history professor, not a neurologist, he does keep a "Complete Anatomical Chart Series" next to the couch to help him understand rudimentary neurological processes. He got it from the Nature Company.)

Jacobs partially cops to this critique. "The problem is that in hypnosis," he says, "people say things that are not true." He hastens to add that "about 20 percent of the people remember things without hypnosis. That is *extremely* important to remember." But when I press him on how much information he gathers without it, he says, "Maybe 5



David Jacobs & friends

percent or so, not a whole lot.”

Admitting the unreliability of hypnosis would seem to hamstring his entire body of research, but Jacobs has a ready answer for that. The trick, he confides, is to have an acute bull detector, to be steeped in the phenomena so that you can ask the right questions at the right time and guard vehemently against contradictory data. “It’s not an exact science,” he says, “which is why in abduction research, you’ve got to build up patterns, corroborating detail and data.”

No matter that standard scientific methodology involves positing hypotheses and then attempting to *disprove* them. Jacobs has streamlined the problem of bothersome inconsistencies. “If they say, ‘An alien is talking to me with its mouth,’ I say to myself, ‘I don’t think so. This does not sound right to me.’ And since in 11 years of doing this I’ve never heard that, that one’s not going to reach print.” (It’s reached print elsewhere, however, as numerous non-Jacobs abductees have claimed aliens have spoken in everything from British to Danish accents, with Strieber even hearing auditory utterances that were “startlingly Midwestern.”)

Jacobs answers skeptics with the observation that the abduction stories must be true because they echo each other to “every precise detail,” albeit with “wide variation, within a narrow scope.” Jacobs tells me that he never includes an abduction detail in his data unless he’s heard it twice. Unless, of course, you count an entire chapter in *Secret Life* entitled “Sexual Activity and Other Irregular Procedures.” These, he writes, “may occur many times to an individual abductee although other abductees may never experience them.”

One of the procedures described is hybrid sex, in which the abductee reports that a loved one’s face phases in over the alien’s. Mental tricks like these are frequently played through “mindscan,” a term Jacobs hates but was forced to coin in constructing the new discipline. Intercourse, he says, “takes place without much preliminary stimulation.” Bad news for the ladies, but male earthlings can breathe easy, since “the insertion of the ‘penis’ is quick, and . . . does not feel normal, it is usually very thin and very short.” (They

may take our women, but damned if they're going to keep them.)

As you might expect from interstellar nooky, some of the goings-on are weird. Women abductees are sometimes brought to orgasm through mindscan, though it "is not a pleasurable event." And men who are getting irrigated for their life-serum are often brought "to ejaculation but not necessarily orgasm." These all raise questions that need answers, though history professor Jacobs admits he doesn't have them, as he is not a urologist or gynecologist. (He does keep a plastic uterus next to the couch. He got it from Today's Sponge.)

Talking for hours to Jacobs, even a putterer like myself picks up on some inconsistencies, such as the delicate matter of sperm extraction. In *Secret Life*, abductees report all matter of pumping from vacuum-like hoses connected to machines, but in our interview Jacobs describes the aliens putting humans in sexual positions, and before the moment of truth, forcing withdrawal to collect specimens in a container. Why wouldn't they rely on the machines, which

are, after all, much more tidy? "I think they do sex when the mechanical devices don't work," says Jacobs, "and there's a certain amount of evidence to that."

Phil Klass has documented in his book *UFO Abductions: A Dangerous Game* how the number of abduction reports dramatically increases after airings of UFO-themed movies of the week. But "many of them don't even read the books or see the movies," Jacobs tells me—although in his book, he reports that many abductees "buy every book they can get on the subject, compulsively talk about it, and seem unable to concentrate on much else."

How does he assess the mental fitness of those who claim to have been abducted? Why, with Question #20 from his screening interview: "Have you ever been hospitalized for psychiatric or psychological disorders? Are you on medication for emotional or psychological problems?"

I ask him how many abductees he's had psychological evaluations performed on. "Just a few," he says, and then takes a long pause, "... who've given me their own evaluations." But he doesn't just take their word for it, because he's an excellent judge of character: "You know how off the wall you'd have to be to believe something was happening to you when it wasn't?"

It doesn't really matter if the supposed abductees aren't completely sound, since once they've reached Jacobs, "they're at the end of the line. . . . The quest is over. They can get their lives in order, they understand what's happening, they leave me, they can lead a normal life as best they can." Because, the history professor insists, more than a researcher, he must approach his subjects as a therapist: "Ethically, it is the only way to proceed."

Unless of course his subjects get into the high cotton, psychologically speaking: "If they are so depressed they wind up in a hospital, I tend not to work

with them, because I'm not a therapist." But he plays one in real life, since he can tell there's nothing "seriously wrong or delusional" with most of his subjects. Except when there is, like when a student he hypnotized 10 times "became paranoid the psychology department secretaries were plotting against her" and shortly thereafter "descended into florid schizophrenia." Jacobs, scrupulous empiricist that he is, "used nothing" from her interviews. "I don't care whether she was telling the truth or not," he says.

Jacobs's work in the field is, you see, basically altruistic, because even though the alien-human breeding program is "the largest scandal in the history of science," he's in no danger personally of being abducted. He has discovered that being abducted is, in fact, "intergenerational"—it's hereditary (like some mental illness). How does he know this? From the evidence, of course. "Everyone" was abducted from the time they were small children, and parents have reported their children being abducted. But when I ask him if he's ever seen abductees produce any missing-person reports, he replies: "You're going to have to ask them. A person comes to me—I'm not the interrogator giving them the third degree. . . . Obviously, there's a certain presumption of truthfulness here." He would not supply any names or phone numbers, however, so I couldn't ask them.

To his credit, Jacobs is as compulsively honest when getting called on an embellishment as he is prone to embellish. When I ask him how many of his subjects were used for reproductive chores, he replies unequivocally, "All the men have sperm taken from them, all the women have eggs taken from them and have babies extracted from them." All 114? *Really?* "I can't say that," he admits, "not all, because 25 percent of the people who see me only have one session, and then they get too scared."

When I ask him to go to his files and tally exactly how many people have told him some approximation of this story, he determines that 39 out of 70 women told him about how they had been used sexually, and 20 out of 44 men did the same. But still, he stresses, just because they didn't tell him about it "doesn't mean it never happened to them. The chances that it happened are almost certain."

And the fact of the abductions themselves is an equal certainty, as there is more than mere anecdotal corroboration; there is physical evidence, such as anomalous scarring. I point out to Jacobs that he had told me earlier how "the aliens can do things to the human body that are astounding, like surgical proce-

dures. . . . There's no scar, no nothing." He responds: "Not usually, although, sometimes, there are major scars. . . . It depends on the procedure."

And how does he know that, say, ovarian scar tissue isn't from some pedestrian earthbound operation? "Well, that's what they tell me," Jacobs says, though he does work with "one gynecologist who'll remain anonymous who does all my abductee work . . . and who's seen things he's never seen before in his life."

Nearly all abductees report that they received alien implants in their noses, brains, and sinus cavities. How many of the implants, which he says have even been expelled, has he seen? "Over the years, we have gotten X-rays and MRIs of objects. We've had people with extraordinary things." But has he seen any of the actual implants himself? "No," he says, but he has seen two X-rays of "anomalous white spots." And did he actually order the X-rays himself? "No, but I looked at the MRIs and read the report."

Finally Jacobs becomes ruffled. My approach, he informs me, is "stupid" and "disturbing." He accuses me of being an "amateur investigator . . . a researcher you ain't." Because, Jacobs explains, his patience nearly depleted, "What you're doing, Matt, what I got to admit is really annoying, is searching for contradictions."

It was after my interview with Jacobs that I spoke to Fred Hills at Simon & Schuster (the rest of the house brass—including publisher Carolyn Reidy and editorial director Alice Mayhew—didn't return my numerous calls). When I pointed out to Hills that Jacobs provides no diagnostic breakdown of samples, no quantitative analysis of which anecdotes apply to how many subjects, no discussion of conflicting answers, Hills's enthusiasm for the book seemed to be dampened.

"I think those are questions you should be putting to him. I'm not the author of the book," he responded. Does Simon & Schuster, one of America's most distinguished publishing houses, have any responsibility in this regard? "We would not consciously publish stuff we believe to be egregious or calculatedly deceitful," but nevertheless, this particular project "calls for a certain suspension of disbelief to enter the portals of this subject."

One final question, Mr. Hills: Does it trouble you that historian Jacobs has no background in any of the disciplines that might actually lend credence to his scholarship? "I've worked with authors in every subject area long enough to no longer be impressed by the initials Ph.D.," Hills said. "Fools and knaves come with every kind of academic degree attached. So no, that doesn't trouble me." ♦

BACKLASCH *The Trouble with Feminism*

By Harvey Mansfield

The late Christopher Lasch was one of those rare men who take women seriously. He did this by taking their arguments seriously, an effort which in our time begins with taking feminism seriously. In *Women and the Common Life*, a collection of his last articles, Lasch considers the essential feminist argument for “choice”—a life of autonomy or perfect freedom. Without ever attacking feminism, he finds that feminist choice does not make sense and harms our democracy.

A historian, Lasch sees feminism in its historical context. He notes that feminism defines its own context as a revolution against patriarchy. Just as the French revolutionaries invented the term *ancien régime* to describe everything before the revolution of 1789, so the feminists have set up “patriarchy” as a catch-all category covering all history before the 1960s. They want it made clear that only today’s feminism can sustain women’s self-respect, so they measure every other situation for women by today’s standard. They also need a target for blame.

Responding to this simplification, Lasch insists on taking pre-feminist women seriously too. He takes up the medieval and early-modern *querelle des femmes*, a literary controversy over women that started in the *Roman de la Rose* in 1275 and continued as late as Rabelais and Shakespeare’s *Taming of the Shrew*. Feminists are inclined to take the side of spunky women (as

who is not?) and to misinterpret their sexual insults of men as subversive digs against patriarchy. But Lasch shows that the quarrel was not over women but between love and marriage (which, he remarks, do not go together, as the song says, like a horse and carriage). And it was not so much a choice between love and marriage as a conflict of necessities in human life.

Feminism takes for granted the possibility of sexual harmony based on equality between men and

Christopher Lasch
Women and the
Common Life
Love, Marriage, and Feminism

W.W. Norton, 196 pp., \$23

women, whereas this old quarrel presumes antagonism between the sexes and conflict between women’s roles as wife and lover. There is no doubt that aristocracy, with its concern for family lineage, intensifies the conflict, but perhaps it also brings into relief the same difficulty we feel today in another form. For one does not choose to fall in or out of love, but one chooses to marry (or divorce). Thus choice is often—or should we say always?—a matter of settling for less than one’s *first* choice.

Lasch shows that bourgeois marriage, which replaced concern for lineage with desire for companionship between husband and wife, was hedged by the requirements of parental consent and public ceremony. Today we have abandoned parental consent, and the marriage ceremony often comes after the fact, so we have marriage by reluctant

decision or desperate search as well as marriage based on impulsive whim. Choice is not so easy to get from life as we think. Lasch’s perceptive excursion into history avoids both sentimentality and a sense of superiority, illuminates our problems and discourages us from self-congratulation.

After dispelling the notion that the place of women is controversial only in our time, or that every previous society was simply patriarchal, Lasch turns to the present and takes up a theme of his previous books—the danger to democracy of the therapeutic state or of neo-paternalism. A democratic society of equals implies that each of us is competent to run his own life, since it does no good for all to be equal but incompetent. Thus the choices we make as equals must be competent choices. That they *will* be competent is what Tocqueville referred to as the democratic dogma.

Lasch was a profound democrat because he was a firm believer in the competence of ordinary people. But their competence is denied by the idea that society can be reformed by subjecting it to scientific reason, an idea that gives birth to professional experts of all sorts. Lasch traces the progress of the scientific idea during the 19th century as it applied to women, but he is aware that it originated in the 17th century or even earlier. Descartes’s separation of mind from body—so that mind has no sex—and Hobbes’s separation of self from society—by which sex has no natural social role—were thoughts that enabled us, Lasch says, to envision fundamental changes in the conventions that had governed the posi-

Harvey Mansfield, professor of government at Harvard University, is working on a study of manliness.

tion of women in society.

Science might seem to be an aid to choice, and of course it was originally intended to be: the more science, the more control, the more choice. But, looking at the political consequences, Lasch sees that science, or the various sciences of rational control, have subtracted from human choice because they have systematically removed the power of decision from ordinary people with common sense and given it to experts with the prestige of science. Thus, the "dead hand of the educator," for example, takes over the unsupervised play of children after school, transforming it into "extracurricular activities" that fit into a "learning experience." The use of jargon is a sign of usurpation of the citizen by a technician.

Feminism promotes this change without realizing it. Its central policy is on abortion and is called "pro-choice," for the right of abortion frees a woman from the tyranny of nature that has unfairly left her in sole possession of the human fetus. But when it comes to the choice, does she make it by herself? No, the pro-choice position is that abortion should be a matter between a woman *and her doctor*. The doctor, stating the medical options, replaces her husband or her mother, who might give moral advice.

Lasch argues that feminism culminates the trend of modern democracy toward greater choice in principle and less choice in practice. Feminism revolted against the confinement of women to the home, but that condition was very new, the result of the middle class's moving to the suburbs. Lasch points out that Betty Friedan's book *The Feminine Mystique*, which began current American feminism in 1963, is not about the age-old oppression of patriarchy but a very specific complaint about women's life in the suburbs. Actually, women went to the suburbs by choice, says Lasch, to free themselves from the impositions of city life, where there are always other people

around you. What drew people to the suburbs was the dream of perfect freedom in which you could see whom you liked when you liked. Suburbs excluded “everything not subject to choice—the job, the [extended] family, the enforced sociability of the city streets.”

When women got to the suburbs, however, they found that the extra choice they had sought left them alone in the home with too little to do. The feminist revolt was a necessary response, but it made matters worse. The problem was the strict separation between home and work, but when the feminists tried to solve it, they maintained the separation and simply insisted on having the same work as men. They needed a calling but they went for careers. They rejected the notion of volunteer work that would allow them to be outside the home without being inside an office, and they joined the competition to become a boss by submitting themselves to working for a boss. So much for women’s liberation!

Lasch is not yet finished with his wonderful analysis. He shows that the feminist understanding of rational control is practically Orwellian. One would think that when a woman takes more control of her life, and lives more by her own choice, there would be a standard by which to measure her gain and society’s improvement. But for the feminists, Lasch explains, a woman’s choice is not secure and her control of her life is imperfect if she tries to live up to standards set by someone else. She is only in control if she lives for her own self-esteem rather than for an ideal of perfection she may well fall short of. If you make no demands on yourself, you will find yourself easy to please. This is hardly what is meant by taking control of your own life.

In the end, our society is democratic despite the experts. The experts

do not control us, but they corrupt us. They deliver us to a “culture of narcissism,” the title of Lasch’s famous 1979 book, and they serve us with various kinds of therapy designed to keep us content with ourselves.

Lasch seems to doubt that we will remain content with the democratic self-esteem of which feminism is only the latest type. “Science enhanced human control over nature,” he says, “but it left human

beings more fearful than ever of what could not be controlled.” That will be the cause of our discontent. What will be the remedy? Lasch says some pages later:

“Submission to God makes people less submissive in everyday life. It makes them less fearful but also less bitter and resentful, less inclined to make excuses for themselves.” Less inclined to make excuses: What a man Christopher Lasch was. ♦



THE ASSAULT ON DAVID HELFGOTT

Why Are the Critics So Mad at the Shine Man?

By Jay Nordlinger

Last year, David Helfgott was a former music student who had fallen victim to a crippling mental illness. This year, he is the most famous pianist in the world. All because of a movie.

Shine tells the story of Helfgott’s unusual life, depicting him as a prodigy raised in Australia by a cruel and twisted father. David endures years of abuse, attracts regional renown, and finally breaks with his father to study in London. But he is unable to cope with estrangement from the man who shaped him and, after winning a competition with his playing of Rachmaninoff’s Third Concerto, goes mad. He is then returned to Australia, where he is confined to a series of institutions. In time, he finds a wine bar in which to entertain customers and meets an astrologer named Gillian, who marries him, improves his health, and steers him back to the stage.

The facts of the movie are in dis-

pute—Helfgott’s siblings, for example, say that the portrayal of their father is a travesty, and many contend that Helfgott is as sick as ever—but the 50-year-old pianist is now an internationally beloved example of triumph over adversity.

As the movie became a hit, the *Shine* team—led by Gillian Helfgott and the filmmakers—organized a North American tour for Helfgott encompassing 10 cities. Every one of the concerts sold out immediately. In the same period, Helfgott’s recording of the Rachmaninoff concerto shot to number one on the classical charts, and even made an appearance on the popular charts, too. It is one of the bestselling albums in the history of RCA—a label whose catalogue boasts the likes of Arturo Toscanini, Artur Schnabel, and Leontyne Price. But not everyone has rejoiced at Helfgott’s success. Music critics, in particular, have been unsporting. They have been angry, crabbed, and confused.

When Helfgott played his first concert, in Boston, the critical reac-

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tion was fierce. Helfgott was not an ordinary professional pianist, and he was far from "cured." Instead, he was a babbling, tic-filled sufferer from what physicians term a "schizoaffective disorder," and his playing reflected that condition. Richard Dyer of the *Boston Globe* decried "a sad spectacle" and "a morally bankrupt atmosphere," concluding that "Helfgott should not have been in Symphony Hall last night, and neither should the rest of us." Tim Page of the *Washington Post* wrote that "the whole event seemed profoundly exploitative" and that the pianist "was excruciating to watch" (an interesting word, that last, in a review of a piano recital).

As the *Shine* Tour continued, virtually the entire American critical establishment heaved with indignation. They were frustrated by Helfgott's appeal, annoyed at the thousands who flocked to him, and suspicious of the handlers and packagers who shared in his profits. Many were protectively pitying, like Mark Swed of the *Los Angeles Times*, who wrote that "guileless as Helfgott surely is, guile surrounds him." The Associated Press found a Juilliard teacher who said, "He's not a man who should be making money playing the piano," but one who "should be playing at home for therapeutic reasons." The *New York Times*—which ran several Helfgott pieces—took the rare step of publishing an editorial, which remarked that Helfgott's "tour is more about the powers of celebrity and empathy than about great musicianship," and that he "seems to be the captive of an entrepreneurial enterprise being manipu-

lated for maximum profit." The *Post's* Page, invited on National Public Radio, said, "I really wondered why he was being exhibited when he could be being helped," and then demonstrated exactly what has stuck in so many craws: "We have reached the point in . . . the history of classical music in this country that the hottest person in classical music is a

such a piece. For one thing, it opened him to charges of envy and pique, for Kipnis, a superb musician in an unglamorous field, will never achieve anything like the recognition and riches that have come Helfgott's way. Kipnis wrote that Helfgott's playing "was so uniformly devoid of poetry and rhetorical thrust, and so full of unwanted and unmarked accents, as

to cause one to wonder what in the world musically sophisticated listeners might make of it all." Kipnis himself should have been caused to wonder why he, who has his faculties and a fine life, was writing public criticism of a man who is not his peer but a symbol of perseverance and hope. The review, in a sense, was more embarrassing than Helfgott could be at his feeblest.

The *Shine* phenomenon reached a high pitch on Oscar night, when Geoffrey Rush, who plays the older Helfgott in the movie, picked up the Best Actor award and defended the tour against accusations that it was a "circus." Helfgott himself was on

hand to play *The Flight of the Bumble Bee*. He was obviously nervous—as performers of all kinds tend to be on such an occasion—and he played poorly, but he got through it and warmly accepted the audience's lusty cheers. Two days later, David Daniel in the *Wall Street Journal* was witty and merciless: "Bumble bees had a right to picket," though "the audience seemed to love it anyway, as no doubt did several gazillion TV viewers," in a "mass demonstration of tin ears and false sentiment."

One thing about *Shine* that the tin-eared and falsely sentimental masses



David Helfgott

Kevin Chadwick

disturbed man who can hardly play the piano."

Page and the *Post* were close to obsessed with *Shine*-dom. The paper printed not only a feature piece and a review by Page (both long-ish, and excellent), but a weird little item titled "On Tour, Helfgott Hits Many a C-Note," in which Page toted up the costs of the tour in an effort to determine how much money it was making. Moreover, the *Post* ran an extraordinary review—this one in addition to Page's—by the harpsichordist Igor Kipnis. It was odd that Kipnis would have agreed to write

are in love with is the Rachmaninoff concerto, which is a star of the movie. This magnificent work has always lived in the shadow of its predecessor, the Rachmaninoff Second, whose concluding theme was transformed into the song "Full Moon and Empty Arms." A moviegoer encountering the concerto for the first time will naturally march to the record store, if he is interested, and buy . . . which recording? The Helfgott, of course, and why not? There are better recordings (meaning all of the others), but the moviegoer doesn't know that, and, if he did, he wouldn't care.

Nor should he: The point of his purchase is not the performance but the music. Yet the critics begrudge even this. Eliot Morgan, also in the *Wall Street Journal*, said that the Helfgott recording's success "shows that people can be fooled at least some of the time," and Scott Cantrell of the *Kansas City Star* wrote, "What's sad is that hundreds of thousands of people buying this disc . . . will think the piece really sounds like this." Well, it does—the assertion that the concerto is unrecognizable in Helfgott's trembling hands is simply false, something that no one with a grip on himself could say.

Funny thing about the Helfgott recording: It doesn't sound like the playing of a crazy person. It isn't maniacal or uncontrolled (like some performances). Rather, it is reserved and mousy. Indeed, it is far and away the tamest, most tepid recording ever made of this mercurial and majestic work. But there is magic in it, magic put there by Rachmaninoff, and the fans who are buying it and loving it are not wrong to do so.

It is perhaps normal for elites to balk at the introduction of high art into popular culture, where distortion and degradation lie in wait. Musicians surely winced when Rush strode to the stage to accept his Oscar: He was accompanied by a soupy Hollywood-orchestra arrangement of the opening theme of the Rachmaninoff. Pianists stubbornly

refuse to refer to Mozart's Piano Concerto No. 21 as the "*Elvira Madigan* Concerto," as it has been widely known since the appearance of that movie, which used it. *Ordinary People* and *Platoon* made lollipops out of Pachelbel's Canon in D and Barber's *Adagio for Strings*, and *Apocalypse Now* turned a Valkyrie ride into a clownish cliché. But the marriage of music and the movies can be beautiful, as in the recent *Romeo and Juliet*, which closed with Leontyne Price's recording of the *Liebested* from Wagner's *Tristan und Isolde*. To employ music untraditionally is not necessarily to sully it.

David Helfgott should never have been judged as an ordinary pianist. He, manifestly, is not. And if people go to hear him "more for the madness than the music," as the *New York Times* editorialized, so what? Concertgoers have innumerable motivations, and Helfgott is an exceptional experience amid hundreds and hundreds of everyday ones. I, for one, would rather hear Helfgott play once than, say,

Emmanuel Ax play banally yet again.

And Helfgott, though unwell, is not a victim; neither are those around him his victimizers. He is better off on stage, where he both delights and is delighted, than drooling unnoticed on a couch in Perth. Gillian Helfgott, astrologer or not, analyzes keenly when she says, "I think there are people who are coming to see a man who has fought his way through the wilderness [rather than for pianism]. But if they come for that reason, I think they leave deeply touched. Critics have a right to express their views, but people have a right to express their views, too."

For his part, David Helfgott seems not so damaged as to be unable to speak for himself, and what he says, in his flighty patter, will ring true to anyone who has been fortunate enough to touch a musical instrument: "It's a miracle. I'm very lucky. One mustn't be so serio. It's all a game. Must be grateful." Yes, must be. ♦



DISEASE SQUAD

Richard Rhodes Chronicles a Scientific Hunt

By Claudia Winkler

For decades, across continents and disciplines, an unusual parade of men and women has been working to unravel the secret of the "spongiform encephalopathies." This odd family of neurological ailments, fatal to several mammals including man, is of keen interest now because of mad cow disease. If bovine spongiform encephalopathy,

epidemic in Britain since 1985, has actually spread to humans through the food supply, a serious human epidemic may be in store. In just the last year, evidence has mounted that the leap across species boundaries has taken place.

Richard Rhodes's new book, *Deadly Feasts*, is a breezy, immensely readable account of the effort to solve the riddle of the spongiform encephalopathies. More broadly, it is a splendid description of the process

Richard Rhodes
Deadly Feasts:
Tracking the Secrets of a
Terrifying New Plague

Simon & Schuster, 259 pp., \$24

Claudia Winkler is managing editor of THE WEEKLY STANDARD.

by which scientific knowledge is advanced. Embedded in this story are all the predictable components of complex endeavor: individual drive and institutional interest; lust for recognition and selfless dedication; serendipity and strategy; rivalry and cooperation; inspiration and painstaking work.

The interplay of personalities is fascinating. Towering above them all is Carleton Gajdusek, the National Institutes of Health research physician who led the assault on the mysterious New Guinean disease kuru, one of the two spongiform encephalopathies found in man. Gajdusek learned of kuru on a stopover in New Guinea in 1957 and trekked off into the highlands to begin what would become one of his several lifelong quests: to explain the causation of kuru and related diseases. Thirty years and a Nobel prize later, Gajdusek's theories and the work of the lab he directed at NIH until 1996 remain state of the art. Yet the project's advancement required the contributions of others very unlike him.

Clarence Gibbs is as rooted as the much-traveled Gajdusek is peripatetic: He still lives in the house his great-grandparents built in Washington, D.C. In the early 1960s, Gajdusek recruited Gibbs to take charge of the animal experiments that would show kuru to be an unconventional infectious disease transmissible to primates. Patricia Merz studied brain cells through a hugely powerful electron microscope in a Staten Island lab. For days and months and years on end, she searched directly for the agent of disease. "A jigsaw-puzzle aficionado, pragmatic and grounded and impatient with abstraction," she

eventually found minute formations she called "scrapie-associated fibrils." They are now accepted as the distinctive mark of the spongiform encephalopathies—though even today the nature of the disease agent, its remarkable resilience, and its means of propagation have not been fully elucidated.



Georgette with drooping lip.

Deadly Feasts (Simon & Schuster)

Gajdusek, Gibbs, Merz, and others were engaged in a search for knowledge that is the central drama of *Deadly Feasts*: the sequence of forming and testing alternative explanations for phenomena; of pondering anomalies that cry out to be accounted for.

Gibbs, in charge of the experiments testing whether kuru could be transmitted to animals, oversaw a menagerie of 10,000 mice, 75 monkeys, and 7 crucial chimpanzees in a disused dairy barn he renovated at a federal wildlife research center. Kuru

has an incubation period of years, so once the chimps had been carefully injected with a solution of kuru-diseased brain, it was a matter of waiting and watching. Gibbs chose never to study a human kuru patient so as to keep his observations of the animals uninfluenced by anything he had previously seen.

Eventually a chimp named Georgette exhibited changes. She began to withdraw, with a vacant look in her eyes. Sometimes she shivered. Her condition deteriorated steadily. Rhodes quotes from the lab assistant's notes:

"14 July 65. Appears to have the 'shakes.' Trembles at frequent intervals. No sense of balance. Fell off stoop in cage. Moving around very slowly. Jaw hangs open constantly."

"15 July 65. Tremors continue. Fell off top of cage today."

A few days later, another of the team, who had worked in New Guinea, summed up his observations with: "clinical impression—kuru." Gajdusek was summoned home from New Guinea. He was impressed, but he still harbored doubts.

Georgette continued to decline. By October, when she was sacrificed, she had to be fed by hand and could no longer walk. A specialized neuropathologist named Elizabeth Beck was flown in from England for the autopsy. She took the brain back with her and three weeks later cabled NIH: Georgette's pathology was indistinguishable from human kuru.

But, as always, human weakness and human tragedy complicated matters. A deep rivalry developed between Gajdusek's lab and that of the ambitious Stanley Prusiner in

San Francisco. It was discovered that some recipients of corneal transplants or of Human Growth Hormone harvested from cadavers had been infected with the spongiform encephalopathy known as Creutzfeldt-Jakob. And finally, Gajdusek's career was derailed by his arrest in April 1996 for molesting an adopted son, to which he pleaded guilty in February.

In the 1980s, mad cow disease would present British politicians and regulators with the challenge of curbing a poorly understood epidemic and protecting human health from dangers more potential than known. Their policy choices should have been scrupulously informed by science; inevitably, they were also subject to economic and public-relations pressures. Rhodes's account of the British authorities' almost cavalier bungling of the crisis is the weakest part of his book. The winner of a Pulitzer prize for his justly acclaimed *Making of the Atomic Bomb* in 1986, he expresses a breathless anger at politicians, especially those of a conservative stripe, who did not invariably choose the most radical precautions when mad cow disease appeared. Rhodes appears to favor policies designed to eliminate all risk regardless of cost, including in this country, where mad cow disease has never been found.

Indeed, the book is marred by Rhodes's taste for the sensational and his overstatement of the probable danger to man. The "deadly feasts" of the title are those by which some of these maladies were spread: ritual cannibalism in New Guinea, which was abandoned in the late 1950s, causing kuru to die out; and the feeding to cattle of protein supplements made from cattle remains, the "industrial cannibalism" that unwittingly fanned the epidemic in Britain before the government banned the practice in 1989. (Rhodes aficionados will detect here a minor theme of his work: He once wrote a novel about the Donner party, as well as an arrest-

ing childhood memoir of torture at the hands of a cruel stepmother, *A Hole in the World*, in which he recounted his stepmother's "cannibalizing" his identity.) If indeed eating beef products has given the disease to humans, that becomes another deadly feast.

As for whether mad cow disease actually has infected humans through their food, mounting evidence strongly suggests that it has, though the rate of transmission across species is low. By the end of 1996, some 14 cases of a novel human spongiform encephalopathy had been confirmed in Britain and one in France. Given the long incubation period, the victims of this "new-variant Creutzfeldt-Jakob" were probably infected by beef products in the 1980s, before public-health countermeasures were in place.

The incidence of new-variant Creutzfeldt-Jakob is expected to grow in the short term. Still, even worst-case estimates of where it could con-

ceivably peak show Rhodes's invocation of the Black Death—which wiped out one third of Europe in the 14th century—to be silly. The latest scientific update, by Paul Brown and Leon G. Epstein in the March 1997 issue of *Neurology*, stresses the lack of any suitable model for assessing the future but concludes: "Predictions of a huge epidemic . . . are probably not justified."

If the threat is something short of apocalyptic, it is certainly real and demands to be more widely understood. For this, Rhodes's book is a fine starting point, and his alarmism may usefully draw attention to the problem. As he notes, a coming thing in medicine is the transplantation of animal organs and tissues into human beings. Doctors and patients contemplating such transplants will need to guard against the clear risk that procedures intended as therapeutic may transmit a near-indestructible agent of fatal disease from animals to man. ♦



HOLLYWOOD HUMORIST

Rob Long, Cheers Writer, Sparkles On

By Andrew Ferguson

Gore Vidal once said something interesting and perhaps true.

If you are now recovered from the shock, I will tell you what it was. The reason for the postwar decline in American fiction, Vidal said, was that all the young people with narrative talent had forsaken novels and gone off to Hollywood to make movies. There's a corollary to this, which is

that the reason for the decline in American humor writing is that all the really funny writers have forsaken books and magazines and gone off to Hollywood to make sitcoms.

Rob Long
Conversations with My Agent
E.P. Dutton, 224 pp., \$15.95

If you watch a lot of sitcoms, you may be dubious. But it's at least

partly true, after you consider that the best of *Cheers* or *Seinfeld* or half a dozen other shows is as good as the best of Benchley or Thurber. Rob Long is a case in point. He was a writer, and then a writer-producer (the distinction is mysterious but

Andrew Ferguson is a senior editor of THE WEEKLY STANDARD.

apparently crucial), for *Cheers* in its last few seasons and has since gone on to co-produce two other, shorter-lived sitcoms, *Pig Sty* and *Good Company*. By losing him to Hollywood, the world of written humor lost a great deal. Just how much can be seen every two weeks in *National Review*, where Long writes (without a byline) the "Letter from Al" column, probably the best political satire written in the age of Bill and Hillary. As funny as the column is, it's just moonlighting. Rob Long is a first-tier writer, and Hollywood has him for good.

But not completely, for he's now written a book, too. *Conversations with My Agent* recounts his efforts, post-*Cheers*, to get another sitcom on the air. The book takes the form of a long script, complete with stage directions and extended stretches of dialogue—the conversations of the title—that fairly pop off the page. Interposed are patches of expository prose in which Long guides his readers through the intricacies of Hollywood culture.

On the conflicting interests of networks and sitcom writers, for example:

The network likes things likable. The writer likes things funny. Sometimes—rarely—these two forces mesh, and create a funny, likable show. Sometimes—usually—the network gets its way and another show hits the airwaves set in the Village of the Happy People, where characters learn things and share and hug and make everyone sick. And sometimes—with roughly Halley's comet's frequency—something slips through the sticky machine and comes out funny, likable, sharp, and new.

This, of course, was the kind of show Long and his partner set out to produce, against the predictably overwhelming odds, after *Cheers* went off the air. One of the greatest obstacles seems to be the ennui that comes from being paid large amounts of money to do what appears to be nothing. This is called a "development deal": "Essentially, the studio agrees to pay a writer a minimum sum over

two years, hopeful that the writer, once the novelty of being paid good money—sometimes, great money—to do absolutely nothing but sit and think wears off and he's thoroughly disgusted with a workday that begins at eleven in the morning and ends roughly after lunch, will just decide, "What the hell, I may as well create a hit television show."

All writers are complainers, world-class division, but Long, notwithstanding the boatloads of money and large offices and secretary and expensive lunches in trendy skylit restaurants, complains with such a winning insouciance that you won't begrudge him any of it. (Well, not a lot of it, anyway.) (Okay, a lot of it.) What writers complain about most, after editors, is money, and if the book has a weakness it is that on this point Long is frustratingly vague. Hollywood writers are the first in the long history of wordsmithing not to complain about money. The reasons are desperately obvious. We are told only that the money involved is "great"—or, as his agent puts it, "very serious moneys." Yes, but how serious? How great? I want to know dollar figures, to the decimal point. Then again, maybe I don't.

Long's greatest source of complaint is his agent, never named, a

character of hilarious and unforgettable vividness. She appears only on the phone, only in dialogue—swirling, almost surreal dialogue that could have come from Samuel Beckett, if Beckett weren't such a sourpuss, or dead.

MY AGENT: I hear you yelled at a studio exec.

ME: I didn't yell.

MY AGENT: I didn't say you did.

ME: Yes you did.

MY AGENT: You're getting defensive.

ME: Yeah, but—

MY AGENT: What is this? A "gotcha" conversation? Are we playing "gotcha"? Well, fine, but I can play with the best of them, okay?

ME: [Pause. I pour another Scotch.] Okay, okay. I yelled.

MY AGENT: Good for you. Bust his chops a little. If they push and you roll, then the next time they just push harder. You want me to call him and scream a little?

I won't be giving too much away when I tell you that Long and his partner end up producing their show, and getting it on the air, and that it—as they don't say in Hollywood—bombs. By book's end they are back to being known as the boys from *Cheers*. If there's justice in the real world, which excludes Hollywood, Rob Long will in time be known as many things, not least as the author of this splendid book, the funniest Hollywood memoir in years. ♦



A POET AND A SPY

Henry Adams's Democracy Updated by Ward Just

By James Mann

Ward Just's new novel *Echo House* repeatedly invokes Henry Adams's *Democracy* (1880). In Adams's black comedy, Washington's leading power-broker,

James Mann is a lawyer in Washington, D.C.

Senator Ratcliffe, needing a wife for his coming presidential campaign, conveniently falls in love with Madeleine Lee, a rich, young New York widow who has moved to Washington to learn how the town functions. Madeleine is disgusted by Ratcliffe's gaminess, but she's also

fascinated by it, and while she keeps him at a distance she doesn't reject him outright. At length Ratcliffe proposes marriage, outlining with hilarious bluntness the practical rewards that will be Madeleine's if, with her help, he can get elected president. Initially inclined to accept, she learns at the last moment that he once gave a quid pro quo for a large corporate contribution to his party's national committee. Appalled at Ratcliffe, at Washington, and at herself for being tempted, Madeleine flees, never to return.

Echo House is about what would have happened to a mid-twentieth-century incarnation of *Democracy's* protagonists if they had gotten married. Just focuses on Sylvia, a poet from New York who gets involved with Axel Behl, a shadowy Washington insider. Sylvia, unlike Madeleine, receives no last-minute intelligence that nerves her to flee. More believably, she and the insider wed.

Within a few years, Washington becomes unbearable to Sylvia. The couple divorce, and she returns to New York. Axel soldiers on to the top of the Washington establishment. It's difficult to tell exactly what he does, although it is clear that he serves as an independently wealthy *eminence grise* of the "intelligence community," integral to the operation of a complicated spy network. In the 1940s and 1950s, he hosts weekly lunches for CIA operatives at his Rock Creek Park mansion and sets up a money-laundering operation; in the seventies, he helps throw a congressional committee off the scent of it; in the late eighties, he helps pull the wool over the eyes of an ambitious investigative reporter trying to put the pieces together. Just depicts Axel's quietly triumphant career in great detail, and with such intense admiration that at times *Echo House* reads like Hemingway on toreadors. For Axel's calling is, in its own way, an instance of the same macho cult of elite professionalism:

He saw his chores literally as building bridges [and] identified with the agile and imperturbable New York Indians, the Mohawk who balanced on the footwide beams, a thousand feet to the treacherous river below. . . . If you were successful, your labor and the elegance with which you went about it were noticed only by your fellow aerialists, those who shared the heights. The danger was a given. And the danger was not the point. The bridge was the point, and the applause, when it came, would never be heard by the spectators below. That was its value.

Meanwhile Sylvia pursues her own career with some success. But she can never quite figure her ex-husband or Washington out, and her appalled fascination with them persists. So she comes back from time to time, not visiting her ex, but poking

Ward Just *Echo House*

Houghton Mifflin, 328 pp., \$25

around in his house (their son lets her in) and moving in what used to be their common milieu. Finally, when they are both in their eighties, she materializes at a party for him. The insider's self-image and career have depended on his thinking that right and wrong were categories irrelevant to his daily "chores," and he discovers too late that those categories are very relevant indeed. In an instant he infers her judgment on his life and realizes that he shares it. The denouement is brutal and public.

Echo House is often irritating. Consider this terribly cute exchange, between the poet and a colleague of the insider's:

Sylvia managed a smile and shook her head. "Elizabeth Bishop says that this is our worst century so far, and I think I agree with her."

"Bishop. Isn't she over at the Democratic National Committee?" "She's a poet, Ed."

Equally annoying is that Just is an irrepressible punster. (Two lovers, one of whom is French, are named "Alec" and "Sandrine.") And he has packed into *Echo House* all the tics he's displayed in his previous books: functionaries who ironically bear the surnames of artists (in an earlier book a lawyer was called Mozart; here a banker is named Longfellow); references to *The Great Gatsby*; men in danger humming show tunes; tight-lipped middle-aged men carrying torches for long-dead foreign girls; the glory of acrobats (or in this case, Axel's Mohawks on the bridge). Just has shown the reader all of this many times before. (Maybe that's why he called the book *Echo House*.)

And yet, despite these problems, *Echo House* is not only a riveting novel but also a timely examination of the "inner Washington." It shows that the correlation of forces in a divorce is rarely what it seems—or even what the parties believe it to be. It also shows that, in a Washington career like Axel's, conventional morality is a trauma that has to be repressed if the career is to go forward. When this repressed morality reasserts itself, the consequences won't be benign.

Axel's repression of his values may be necessary if he is to render optimal service to the state. His confronting this dilemma, selecting the wrong option, and repenting too late is what gives the book its tragic heft. *Macbeth* comes to mind. But a more precise parallel is to the well-known words of Cardinal Wolsey in *Henry VIII*:

*Had I but serv'd my God with half
the zeal
I serv'd my King, he would not in
mine age
Have left me naked to mine enemies.*

Morality as a trauma; a return to traditional values as a personal catastrophe—these timely jokes are of a blackness well beyond anything in Henry Adams. ♦

Parody

EXCLUSIVE ★ RANKINGS

U.S. News & WORLD REPORT

APRIL 1, 1997 / FREE

America's



Best



Cults

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